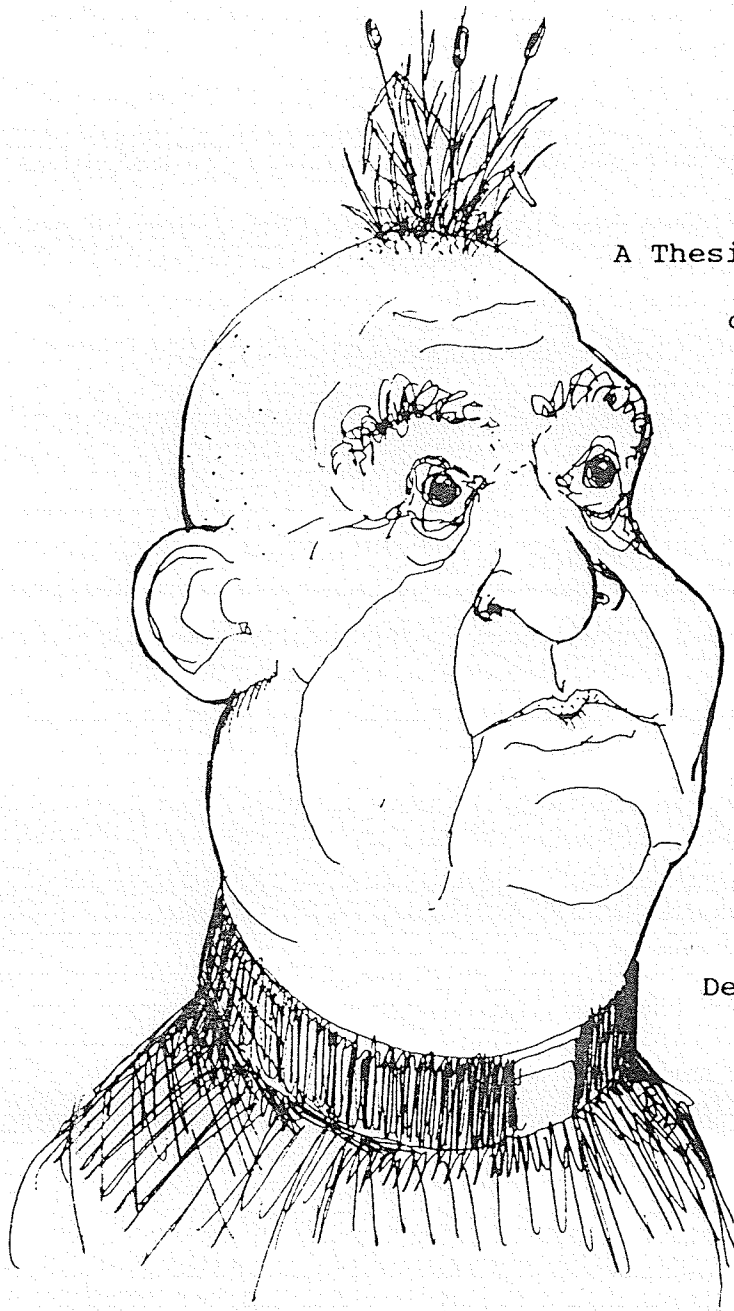


# A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree,  
Master of Landscape Architecture



Department of Landscape Architecture

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

1987

by Mark von Kampen

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IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

BY

MARK VON KAMPEN

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

Scholars from various fields of study, including philosophy, ecology and landscape architecture, have alleged that Judeo-Christian tradition is at the root of Western man's environmental despotism. Further more, individuals such as Ian McHarg have implied that Judeo-Christian values are neither helpful nor compatible with the kind of environmental ethics which could foster ecologically responsible decision making in landscape design and environmental planning.

This thesis deals with the above indictment in several ways. Firstly it identifies interpretive traditions which promote an "anti-ecological" understanding of the biblical relationship between God, humanity, and nature. Secondly, it identifies significant natural themes in the Bible and analyzes them by way of historical critical exegesis. It does so in an attempt to integrate these texts into a more holistic interpretive position which acknowledges the relationship between God and the whole of his creation, non-human as well as human. Thirdly, the thesis applies the results of its interpretive findings to the ethics of landscape architecture and concludes that biblical exegesis reveals a theology of humanity and the natural world which is, in fact, antithetical to exploitation and rather promotes stewardship and care for the environment.



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Nature and Scope of the Project

This study is primarily of a theoretical nature. While it deals with the topic of ethics in landscape architecture, it does so in a manner which explores beyond the level of applied or practical ethics. Its primary focus is directed toward understanding and re-evaluating the presuppositions on which Western environmental ethics is based.

Traditionally, ethics has been perceived in anthropocentric terms as that inquiry which explores human-human relationships. While this aspect of ethics may enter into the discussion, the main thrust of this thesis relates more specifically to the ethical implications of human interaction with the natural environment.

Many of the contemporary writings on environmental ethics have been based on a scientific (ecological) understanding of man's relationship with nature. This trend has stressed that human actions directed toward the natural environment should be guided by principles and laws of ecological science. At the same time, this trend has rejected or ignored other Western traditions which have previously served as determinants for ethical action. Central to this rejection of Western thought has been harsh

criticism of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, which some critics have considered as one of the major contributors leading to Western society's despotic, exploitative attitude toward nature.

This thesis acknowledges the fact that representatives from various fields of study have accepted the basic premise that Judeo-Christian doctrine regarding humanity's relationship with the rest of creation is at the root of the West's ecologic crisis. This thesis, however, supports others in suggesting that the relationship between Judeo-Christian tradition and the West's environmental crisis is less linear and more complex. The thesis argues that Judeo-Christian tradition can be seen as part of a larger cultural matrix whose composite has ultimately contributed to environmental degradation. While the thesis identifies a number of ecologically problematic interpretive movements which have emerged since biblical times, it hypothesizes that within the biblical tradition can be found the seeds of a sound environmental ethic. It further hypothesizes that Western theology's failure to develop a strong environmental ethic is largely the result of its predominantly theanthropocentric (God-human) focus.

The intent of this thesis is to broaden the interpretive scope, thereby re-examining the biblical material in an attempt to develop a more holistic and integrated understanding of the God-man-nature relationship. This in turn will serve as the means by which the thesis will attempt to develop ethical principles for contemporary environmental issues, in particular, those issues which pertain to landscape design and planning. These principles are intended to demonstrate that the biblical canon can serve as a valuable resource for an environmental ethic which is rooted in a deep biblical concern for the goodness, integrity and preservation of the environment.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the thesis will suggest that these principles are not incompatible with, but rather affirm those principles upon which the ethic, philosophy, and practice of landscape architecture is currently based.

## 1.2 Study Objectives

The intent of the study is expanded in the following objectives:

1. To identify Western interpretive traditions which are problematic in the sense that they promote an anti-ecological understanding of the biblical relationship between God, humanity and nature.



2. To survey pertinent biblical and interpretive material in order to develop a more holistic understanding of the relationship between God, humanity and nature as put forth in the Old and New Testament canon.
3. To explore a biblical basis for contemporary ethical discourse on environmental issues pertaining to the landscape design and planning professions.
4. To demonstrate that a theological understanding of Judeo-Christian tradition does not necessitate a narrowly anthropocentric, despotic attitude towards nature but rather can offer one of holism and stewardship.

### 1.3 Study Approach

This thesis seeks to explore the hypothesis that there lie within Judeo-Christian tradition the rudimentary or foundational elements upon which can be developed principles for contemporary environmental ethics. While the obvious temptation in approaching such a problem is to begin with an investigation of the biblical canon, it is valuable also to address the interpretive and critical context within which biblical tradition has and is presently being considered.

This study will begin with a brief introduction to the ethical dimension of human interaction with the natural environment. A clarification of such important terms as land and landscape will be provided here. In order to explain its professional relevance, the thesis will also provide a working definition of landscape architecture which identifies the role of values in landscape planning and design.

Since many contemporary theologians approach the environmental theme in a manner which is similar, in many respects, to the prevailing secular trends in environmental ethics, the thesis will also provide some background information on certain of these trends and the ecological paradigms on which they are based. Of primary concern here will be the development of ecological determinism which has had significant influence on the profession of landscape architecture.

Many of the proponents of the contemporary approaches to ecological ethics have called for a rejection of the Judeo-Christian tradition as being superfluous or even harmful to such discourse. By way of background information, this thesis will also respond to the hypothesis put forth by Lynn White Jr. which states that the Judeo-Christian tradition is at the root of the West's

environmental crisis. This response will suggest that the relationship between this tradition and the environmental crisis is more complex than the linear causal relationship which White and others hypothesize. Attention will be given to other cultural factors such as capitalism, scientific development and democratization, which have contributed to the West's environmental crisis. Recognition will be given to the fact that Judeo-Christian tradition has, in some ways influenced the cultural matrix of the West, which has ultimately led to a destructive, exploitative attitude towards the environment.

Since biblical times, the God-man-nature theme has constantly been reinterpreted and understood in varying ways. Some of these interpretive traditions have tended to encourage an ecological and holistic understanding of this theme, whereas others might be characterized as anti-ecological, on the basis of their separation of one or more aspects of this tripartite theme. In a selective manner, this thesis will sample and assess varied human perceptions of non-human creation which have prevailed in the West since biblical times. Special emphasis will be given to those interpretive trends which might be considered to be problematic (anti-ecological). The interpretive traditions will be addressed under three general time

periods. The first will be the Patristic and Medieval Period. Here, attention will be focused on attitudes from the time of the Church fathers through the monastic Middle Ages. The second will be the transition from medieval times to 16th century beginnings of the modern times. This will include the rise of Renaissance humanism and the Protestant Reformation. The third will be the Modern Period (16th to 20th century). This will involve a discussion of changing attitudes towards the God-man-nature relationship resulting from the development of modern science and secular philosophy as well as the influence of mechanization and technology. Consideration will be given to the modern mechanistic paradigm which evolved out of this development and how this world view has led modern man in his quest for ultimate control over nature. The thesis will mention how Baconian, Cartesian and Newtonian thinking have led to the modern conception of a complete qualitative distinction between humanity and nature based on the assumption that man, "the one and only rational being and living soul," must express his rationality through power, utility, and absolute control over the natural environment. In each of the problematic interpretive positions identified, the thesis will focus, primarily, on the issue of dualistic or dichotomous relationships between God, humanity and nature.

At this point, attention will be focused on the biblical material pertaining to the relationship between God, man and nature. This will involve a careful, necessarily selective, study of the biblical canon as well as pertinent biblical and theological studies.

An ecologically sensitive reading of Biblical texts has as its object the "liberation" of the earth from exploitative human domination. Thus, its aim is analogous, to some extent, to such new readings of Biblical texts as have been proposed in the context of the feminist movement or of liberation theology. Such proposals have sometimes assumed the need for completely innovative hermeneutical approaches developed from within the experiences of certain groups (e.g. women, the poor, racial minorities, etc.). In the same way, the subject under study in this thesis (the earth) might invite a parallel hermeneutic from within the context of landabuse, albeit as experienced vicariously by human observers, the earth itself being mute. Such a project might be desirable and fascinating.

However, the goals of this thesis are less radically innovative, for two reasons. The first, which may be seen as negative though defensible, is the limited scope of a master's thesis as well as the limited hermeneutical

expertise of its author. The second, and more positive reason pertains to the nature of the indictment of ecological insensitivity, if not outright destructiveness, brought against (supposed) Biblical teachings by its modern ecological critics. That indictment has generally not been based on analyses of an all pervading anti-earth mentality of the Bible, but on isolated texts (such as the command to "rule and subdue" the earth, Gen. 1:26,28). A superficial but widespread understanding of such texts has been carried over from earlier times to our day. Only in recent years has the vigor of historical-critical exegesis been applied to these texts in a search for their original intent. It is within the context of such critical analysis that the present thesis begins its investigation as it gathers, tests and extends such studies with the aim of expanding the scope of biblical interpretation beyond the narrowly theanthropocentric (God-human) focus which is prevalent historically among most biblical scholarship. This thesis identifies significant natural themes in the biblical canon and attempts, through critical analysis, to integrate them into a more holistic interpretive position which acknowledges the relationship between God and the whole of his creation, non-human as well as human. As such the thesis negates the indictments mentioned above within the same hermeneutical context in which Biblical teaching has been challenged, namely that of empirical (for Biblical

studies: historical-critical) scholarship. That such scholarships cannot be understood as a road to an unassailable objective reality, in the sense of 19th century objectivism, is taken for granted throughout the thesis.

The interpretive method<sup>2</sup> which the thesis makes use of involves critical analysis of: the text,<sup>3</sup> translation,<sup>4</sup> historical<sup>5</sup> and literary<sup>6</sup> context, form and structure,<sup>7</sup> grammatical data,<sup>8</sup> lexical data,<sup>9</sup> biblical context,<sup>10</sup> theology<sup>11</sup> and secondary literature.<sup>12</sup>

Although it must be recognized that a study of this nature cannot provide an exhaustive inventory and synthesis of all biblical content pertaining to the relationship between God, man and the environment, it is intended that selective explorations in both the Old and the New Testament will shed some light on the whole. In this manner, using the aforementioned interpretive tools, it is hoped that by broadening the interpretive scope, the biblical foundations of a responsible environmental ethic will be disclosed.

Having conducted an interpretive investigation of the biblical God-man-nature relationship, as well as having explored the context within which this theme has historically been interpreted, the thesis will seek to

formulate biblically based ethical principles whose focus is directed toward those environmental issues and perceptions which pertain to the landscape design and planning professions. Here, it is anticipated that the conclusions will disprove the claim that biblical tradition is incompatible with environmentally responsible decision making. To the contrary it is anticipated that the findings of this thesis will demonstrate that biblically based principles for contemporary discourse in environmental ethics reaffirm the established ethical and philosophical principles on which the landscape design and planning professions are based.



#### 1.4 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The author wishes to stress, at this point, that it is not the intent of this thesis to argue that the ethical principles developed herein can be derived solely from biblical material. As the reader will see in the concluding chapter, the biblically based principles which are presented in this thesis are not unlike those principles which currently serve as the foundation of the philosophy, ethic and practice of the landscape design and planning professions. As such this thesis does not wish to claim that the biblical community monopolizes principles which encourage stewardship of the earth. Rather, it wishes to suggest that biblically committed landscape designers/planners need not reject biblical tradition in order to find principles which promote ecologically responsible design (as is implicitly suggested by Ian McHarg, Design with Nature (Garden City, New York: The National History Press, 1969), p. 26). This thesis attempts to demonstrate that biblical teaching does not necessitate a despotic form of anthropocentrism but rather can offer guidance for ecologically responsible design to those, who are committed to its perspectives.

<sup>2</sup>The description of the following exegetical approach is loosely based on Douglas Stuart, Old Testament Exegesis: A Primer for Students and Pastors, Second edition. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984)

<sup>3</sup>Delimiting the unit under consideration (i.e. How much context needs to be included to make discussion meaningful?). Checking textual notes in commentaries, footnotes in versions etc.

<sup>4</sup>Comparison of versions as well as translations given in commentaries.

<sup>5</sup>Consideration of the historical background and foreground as well as the social, cultural and geographic setting. What did the passage say to its original readers or hearers?

<sup>6</sup>Consideration of the literary function and placement. Who was the author and to whom was the text directed? How is it placed in relation to the rest of the book in which it appears?

<sup>7</sup>Identification of literary form and structure (e.g. poetry, prose etc.). Consideration of patterns.

<sup>8</sup>Analysis of significant grammatical issues.

<sup>9</sup>Checking key words in Bible dictionaries and commentaries and identification of special semantic features.

<sup>10</sup>Analysis of the passage's relation to the rest of the Scriptures; whether it is a quote or whether it is quoted or restated elsewhere in the Bible.

<sup>11</sup>Analysis of specific theological issues raised or resolved by the text. Analysis of the theological contribution of the passage

<sup>12</sup>Investigation of what other interpreters have said about the passage.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

### 2.1 Landscape Architecture and Values

Land has been described as becoming landscape when it is considered in terms of its physiographic and environmental characteristics.<sup>1</sup> It encompasses, therefore, more than simply the soil or geographical area. It includes the whole plethora of biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) factors in a holocenotic (complete) relationship with one another. Landscape varies in accordance to these dynamic characteristics and includes, as well, the historic impact of humanity. It is important to note that man is part of the landscape, acting within it and having an effect upon the other constituents (organic and inorganic) just as they effect one another. Therefore, the landscape can be described as a reflection of the dynamic interaction of natural and social systems.

Landscape architecture is the discipline which concerns itself with the planning and design of the landscape in an understanding of the natural and social systems mentioned above. "Planning", in this sense, implies an attitude to land which considers the future; an approach which considers the land's inherent needs in relation to the demand and predicted needs of society. "Design" refers to the

qualitative and functional organization of areas of land which have been designated for a specific purpose through the planning process. Thus, landscape architecture can be described as a merging of applied science and artistic expression.

It is generally recognized that the profession of landscape architecture is of great social and ecological importance and that decision making in the landscape design and planning professions has significant ethical implications. Through planning, design and management, the profession strives to promote better public health and welfare and a strong commitment to resource conservation, land stewardship and ecological responsibility.

## 2.2 Current Trends in Environmental Ethics

Ethics is considered as the realm of knowledge and inquiry into what is right and wrong. Modern ethics has traditionally had an anthropocentric focus, concentrating primarily on human action directed towards other humans. It is only in more recent ethical discourse that attention has, once again, been increasingly focused on human action directed towards nature. This shift in emphasis is due, largely, to the growing awareness of the degradation which

humans have inflicted on the environment as well as the ever increasing impact which technology enables them to have.

Although earlier historical antecedents do exist, the theme of man-induced environmental change did not receive significant recognition until the mid-nineteenth century which might be referred to as the first of four major eras of environmental concern. This first era centered around the works of individuals like Henry D. Thoreau, John J. Audubon and the American statesman and scholar George P. Marsh. While they did not stimulate governmental action or widespread national concern, these men aroused, enough concern among thoughtful citizens to spark the beginnings of the North American conservation movement.

The end of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of the second era of ecological concern. The significance of this era lay in the fact that the first ripple of concern over conservation finally reached beyond the North American citizenry and received governmental attention. As Donald W. Cox explains:

With the closing of the frontier in 1890, conservation publicists like John Muir and John Burroughs spurred President Theodore Roosevelt and his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot, to use their political power to preserve for the coming generations the wilderness wonders that Roosevelt had known in his youth.<sup>2</sup>

The third era of conservation emerged a generation later in response to the Great Depression of the 1930's. Associated with the economic hardships of this time were the winds which stripped the North American plains of their topsoil and surface moisture and caused uncontrolled flooding of some of the major rivers. The planting of shelter-belt windbreaks and the practice of other experimental conservation measures were encouraged by government departments as well as conservation-minded organizations. In Canada, government-subsidized tree planting programs had been initiated in 1901 by the Department of Interior. In 1935, however, the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) was formed with the aim of rehabilitating, through intensive conservation measures, the worst affected areas of the drought and soil erosion which resulted from the dust storms. Comparable conservation services were formed in the United States. With the onset of World War II, however, the noble conservation effort lost momentum with the exception of a few loyal organizations.

The 1950's and 60's saw the re-emergence of the environmental movement and a step towards a new understanding which considered humanity as a part of the natural environment rather than being external to it.

Recognition was given to the fact that just as moral values and norms directed the multi-faceted relationships among people in social, political and economic structures, so they must be extended to include interaction with the natural environment. This became an important aspect of what Aldo Leopold called the "land ethic".<sup>3</sup> Leopold's land ethic insisted on the development of a deep and abiding respect for nature and the affirmation of the natural world's right for continued existence.

The subsequent writings of the past three or four decades have an ever more urgent tone. They have not only sounded a prophetic warning of impending death and destruction, but also have continued Leopold's call for the need to develop and clearly articulate a new ethic; in essence, an act of repentance. The heightened sense of urgency in the need for change is evident in A. S. Boughey's 1975 observations.

Within the past twenty years it has become apparent that we have produced too many people, too many pollutants, too much waste, too many poisons, too much stress. At the same time we have too little food, energy, shelter, education, health and understanding. We are squandering our global resources, fossil fuels, mineral ores, productive lands, wildlife, air, water, landscape, wilderness, and biotic diversity. Disaster looms on every horizon, both for our own population and for the ecosystems we occupy.<sup>4</sup>

Different writers have emphasized different elements in what has been characterized as "the ecological crisis": population size and growth, resource depletion, pollution, species diversity and loss of wilderness. The Ehrlichs have focused on population size and rate of growth.

The explosive growth of the human population is the most significant terrestrial event of the past million millenia... no geographical event in a billion years...has posed a threat to terrestrial life comparable to that of human overpopulation.<sup>5</sup>

Rachel Carson stressed pollution, with special emphasis on new forms of pollution caused by pesticides.

The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal material. The pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life, but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible.<sup>6</sup>

While these and other writers have focused on specific elements, they agree on the fact and importance of the interconnectedness of the various factors. This has led to a related but slightly different approach from that of Leopold's "land ethic".

Much of the more recent ethical discourse is rooted in a scientific model which, as Ian McHarg points out, sees the human relationship to nature,

...as an evolutionary process which responds to laws, which exhibits direction, and which is subject to the final test of survival...nature includes an intrinsic value system in which the



currency is energy and the inventory is matter and its cycles - the oceans, the hydrologic cycle, life-forms and their roles, the co-operative mechanisms which life has developed and, not least their genetic potential.

Such a concept has led to an approach which has been called the "ecological ethic". As Henrik Aay points out, to understand this ethic it is important to see that the ecological view is both a movement dedicated to the restoration of the vital importance of the biophysical world in human affairs, and a method of analysis, a way of seeing the world around us in its complex interrelationships.<sup>8</sup> This view seeks to emphasize that the biosphere is a complex of interrelationships among plants, animals, soil, air and water. This biological complexity is considered to be what insures its biological existence and its ability to adapt to change. Humanity's attempt to reduce the complexity of the biosphere causes it to become less stable and more prone to extinction. Regarding human interference with natural processes, the ecological view stresses that each and every action affects the natural world and that localized human activities trigger a chain of actions and reactions throughout the entire biosphere.

Both the land ethic and the ecological ethic rely on a rejection of the modern scientific world view which had postulated a complete qualitative distinction between humans

and nature.<sup>9</sup> They might be perceived as examples of a new scientific world view. The image of "reality" which they portray can be considered in two environmental paradigms which characterize the 1970's.

The first is the metaphor "Spaceship Earth". Kenneth Boulding is the principal architect of this term. He suggests that the time has come to replace our wasteful "cowboy economy" of the past with the frugal "spaceship economy" required for continued survival in the limited world we now see ourselves to be in.<sup>10</sup> The concept of spaceship earth has received widespread support through the works of several key proponents including Buckminster Fuller. In essence, this approach views the earth as a closed system (space capsule) whose viability depends on the proper functioning of all the interrelated parts. The concept rests on several basic assumptions. Although the earth contains surpluses, its resources are finite. Each change within the biosphere of the spaceship must be viewed in terms of its total effect on the whole system. Just as the safety of a space capsule relies on the proper functioning of all its parts, and its life support system as well as the recycling of basic necessities (air, water, food) so in the same manner, earth must be technologically managed.

There is no call here to turn the technological clock back; rather, technology must be extended to monitor and supervise the proper functioning of the biosphere.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of spaceship earth clearly provides a technological planning solution for the environmental crisis. It is worth noting that this view is primarily that of the scientist or the government official rather than that of the public. It relies somewhat heavily on technological optimism as well as centralized governmental management, both of which have inherent theoretical and practical problems. Since technology has been recognized as one of the major forces contributing to the environmental crisis, there is growing scepticism that a "technofix" solution is the appropriate solution to the problem. This view is characterized by Aay's response

...those who favour a technological solution still dream the wet dream of scientific control of reality. An engineering solution would mean that we duplicate, in a technological way, the organization now found in the natural world. Such a prospect,<sup>12</sup> in my view, is as hazardous as doing nothing.

Aay identifies a second contemporary paradigm which he characterizes by the metaphor "simple earth". This metaphor forms the theoretical framework for a number of rather diverse groups, two of which are of particular interest.

a) The personality ideal: the naturalists

This group's prime objective can be generalized as one of establishing an existential sense of identity with a dependence on the natural world.

The natural world, in this group's view, is the locus of meaning for man; it reveals to him who he really is, and how he must act. It gives him a sense of wonder and dignity, a feeling of "joie de vivre", and a sense of purpose.<sup>13</sup>

It is considered essential, therefore, that humans must continually come in contact with the natural world, or at least on a few occasions during the year. Thus the natural world is seen, in the "Romantic" sense, as a means of "recharging" the human spirit and providing the sense of purpose required in coping with the daily dehumanized urban existence. This group seeks to protect wilderness from the encroachment of civilization while at the same time, trying to transform civilization into "simple earth" in so far as possible without destroying the level of propriety. Aay's criticism of this form of the concept of "simple earth" is that it

...has not in any central way confronted the prevailing commodity interpretation of environment that is in the driver's seat in North America. Nature, rather than a source of meaning is actually only a form of psychic renewal. It is an escape hatch<sup>14</sup> for the complexities of contemporary urban living.

- b) Biological/Ecological Determinism: The natural scientists

While the personality ideal is perhaps more closely associated with the ethos of Leopold's land ethic, biological or ecological determinism is more directly allied with the ecological ethic. It presupposes the ecological model described earlier, which sees the value of nature as lying primarily in the factorial relationships of ecology. Using an understanding of these relationships and the "laws" of nature which govern them, as a basis, some ecological ethicists have sought to develop general principles which in turn form a basis for ecological policy or decision making. The application of these principles in the design and planning process has resulted in the name "ecological determinism", a term made popular by American landscape architect and planner Ian McHarg.

In his book, Design with Nature, McHarg has demonstrated how the principles of ecological determinism can guide a workable, systematic planning process for decision-making in the landscape design and environmental planning professions.<sup>16</sup> This thesis affirms the positive contribution which McHarg's "ecological method" has made to the profession and recognizes his book as a landmark. However, it challenges his claim that Judeo-Christian beliefs are incompatible with ecologically responsible

decision-making and that biblical teaching necessarily encourages environmental despotism. This thesis hypothesizes that the seeds of a sound foundation for environmental ethics can be found within Judeo-Christian tradition. It presupposes, that if seen in the light of contemporary environmental issues and concerns, as well as the ecological understanding of humanity's interdependence with the natural world, these seeds can be brought to fruition and can serve as a biblical basis for ethical conduct which is complimentary to rather than incompatible with the kind of conduct which is fostered by proponents of the "ecological method."

### 2.3 Exploring the Cultural Basis for the Environmental Crisis

Before searching the biblical canon for the seeds of an environmental solution, it is important to consider the extent to which Judeo-Christian tradition may be held responsible for the present environmental crisis and in what sense it might be associated with other cultural variables. Lynn White, another, critic of the Judeo-Christian tradition has put forth the simplistic hypothesis that this tradition is at the root of the environmental crisis, with science and technology serving merely as the means of exploitation.<sup>16</sup> This hypothesis is illustrated in Fig 1. Another writer that has taken a position similar to White's and McHarg's is Arnold Toynbee<sup>17</sup>.

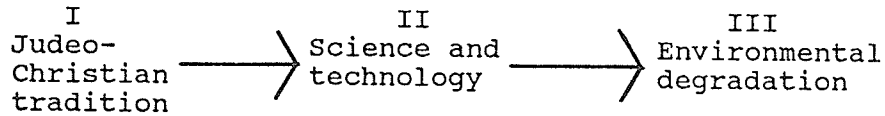


Fig. 1

In an attempt to reject the over-simplicity of White's thesis, Lewis Moncrief explores how its religious aspect, in conjunction with a complex of scientific, economic, political and social factors, has formed a cultural basis for the environmental crisis. Although the graphic presentation of Moncrief's argument (Fig. 2) is also presented in a rather simplistic manner, it serves as a good starting point for understanding the cultural basis for the environmental crisis since it identifies some of the major forces which have influenced how humanity deals with the natural environment. While models such as these are crude and grossly over-simplified pictures of historical reality, they are valuable as graphic illustrations of our thought processes and presuppositions.

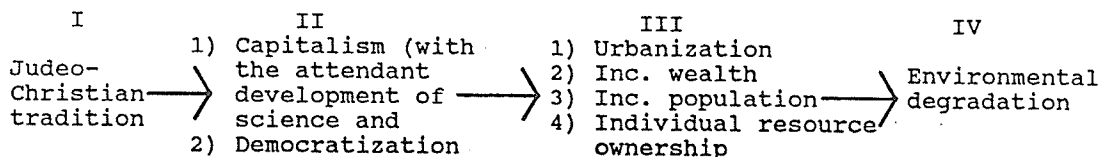


Fig. 2

Moncrief's drawing is inconsistent with his text in the sense that his drawing, like White's, suggests that Judeo-Christian tradition is ultimately at the root of the environmental crisis whereas his text states that

...at best, Judeo-Christian tradition has had only an indirect effect on the treatment of our environment...the link between Judeo-Christian tradition and the proposed dependent variables certainly have the least empirical support.<sup>18</sup>

The major inconsistency appears to be in the manner in which the diagram illustrates the relationships between the variables. Moncrief states that the second and third phases of his model (Fig. 2) are common to many parts of the world while the first is not. This position is also taken by individuals such as Rene Dubos<sup>19</sup> and R. V. Young.<sup>20</sup> He thereby implies that the latter three phases are not entirely dependent on the first. Yet the linear arrangement and the arrows seem to suggest that the same direct causal relationship exists between each of the four phases. If we accept Moncrief's argument that Judeo-Christian tradition only influences the other variables indirectly, then the model should be re-organized with capitalism, science and technology and democratization as the causal factors, for these are the forces which Moncrief is suggesting are more directly at the root of the environmental crisis. Judeo-Christian tradition could be drawn along side as a possible indirect influence, for it does not necessitate all



of the other factors, nor are those other factors wholly dependent on Judeo-Christian tradition. The role of Judeo-Christian tradition, in this case, can be considered as one of having been used historically to legitimize the development of capitalism, science, technology and democratization. More arrows would also be required to show that each variable or group of variables not only affects the one which follows, but also the ones which precede it. For example, capitalism and modern science have an effect on the modern interpretation of Judeo-Christian tradition, just as urbanization and increased wealth influence the direction of science and technology. Moncrief's diagram could thus be re-organized as shown in Fig. 3 in order to more clearly illustrate the complex and dynamic relationship between the various proposed factors which form the basis for the environmental crisis.

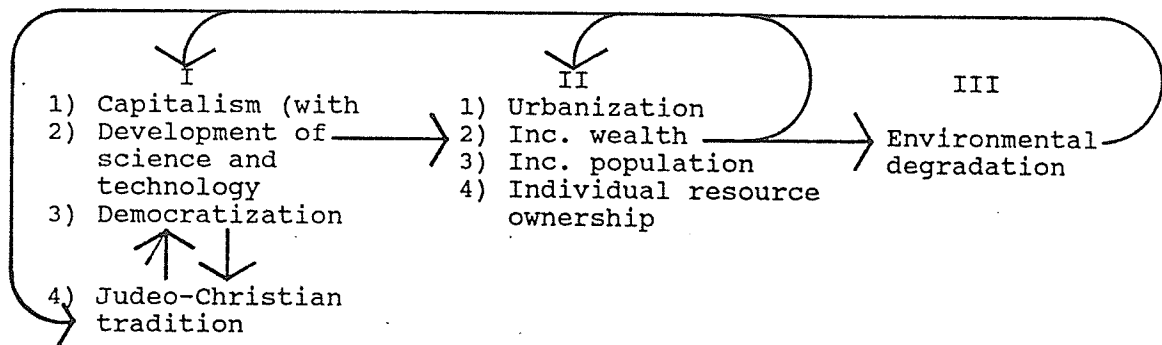


Fig. 3

The extent to which Judeo-Christian tradition resulted in the scientific revolution and the development of capitalism, which occurred at about the same time, has been the subject of great debate. In the case of capitalism, the Protestant Reformation undeniably undermined the authority not only of the medieval church, but also of the feudal lords. As such, it created a context more conducive to such a socio-economic and political institution as capitalism. Even if a critic is unwilling to accept the full extent to which Max Weber has suggested that Calvinist Protestantism led to capitalism, it is clear that this movement represents at least a kind of reinterpretation of preceeding Judeo-Christian traditions in a socio-political climate more receptive of this new economic form. Calvinism clearly promoted the sense of liberation from the bondage of the feudal economy which resulted in a reinterpretation of Christian tradition which sought to legitimize if not stimulate the materialistic drive necessary for the growth of capitalism.

Although the Protestant Reformation triggered the beginning of the socio-political change in Europe, it was not until after the French Revolution that wide-spread democracy and liberalism became prevalent. These conditions created new channels of social mobility which theoretically

made more wealth available to the people. Thus, it provided a suitable environment for a secular capitalistic society, based on self-interest and maximization, to emerge.

In specific terms, this revolution involved a redistribution of the means of production and a reallocation of the natural and human resources that are<sup>21</sup> an integral part of the production process.

Again, the relationships between Judeo-Christian tradition and democracy, with its associated concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity, is more complex than a simple one-way cause-effect arrow might indicate.

Even though the revolution was partially perpetrated in the guise of overthrowing the control of presumably Christian institutions and of destroying the influence of God over the minds of men, still it would be superficial to argue that Christianity did not influence this revolution. After all, biblical teaching is one of the strongest pronouncements<sup>22</sup> concerning human dignity and individual worth.

As with capitalism the relationship of democracy and Christian tradition appears to be one of interpretation and reinterpretation as the feed-back arrows in Fig. 3 suggest.

Another major force in the environmental crisis, which to an extent, was influenced by and also has an influence on Judeo-Christian teachings, was the development of modern science and technology. While this issue will receive greater attention in the following chapter, it is important to consider it here as well. The development of modern

science and technology has its origins during the 16th and 17th centuries. This development rested upon the great emphasis on rationality and human reason, which had characterized Renaissance humanism. Central to the modern world view was the philosophy formulated by Rene Descartes which was based on a dualism between the one and only thinking subject (the human individual), and external objects (nature). This reductionistic theory developed into an ontology of entities which has characterized modern thought ever since.

It might well be argued that the popularization of this modern paradigm in a society, which until then had seen nature as an organic, teleological whole, relied to some extent on a humanistic interpretation of biblical teaching. Under this reinterpretation, the glory and honor of God and the lordship of Christ were played down as was the belief that all creation (human and non-human) possessed its own God-given goodness and glorified his name. What was emphasized was that humans were placed "above" all creation, that they were created in the "image of God" and were given "dominion" over all the earth and commanded to "subdue" it. Thus it was inferred that by their reason, humans were themselves semi-divine while nature on the other extreme was merely composed of inert objects to be controlled and exploited for human use. Human reason expressed as

"practical" or "applied" knowledge was the means of that control.

Humanity's mechanical inventions, which were designed as a physical extension of its self-directed will, gave it ever more power and control over the natural environment and increased productivity. Both White and Moncrief acknowledge the importance of the industrial revolution.

With the revolution the productive capacity of each worker was amplified by several times his potential prior to the revolution. It also became feasible to produce goods that were not previously producible on a commercial scale.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the contemporary terms by which technological control is expressed, are exploitation of resources, maximum production and the ultimate goal of rational productive efficiency. This mechanistic world view makes clear the threat posed against a natural environment which consists of limited resources and capacity to absorb techno-industrial by-products.

It is interesting to observe how democracy, capitalism, modern liberalism and science and technology all legitimize one another and how they co-operate in generating the other variables illustrated in Figs. 2 & 3. As Moncrief points out, With the integration of the democratic and the

...technological ideals, the increased wealth began to be distributed more equitably among the population. In addition, as the capital to land ratio increased in the production process and the demand grew for labor to work in factories, large populations from the agrarian hinterlands began to concentrate in the emerging industrial cities.<sup>24</sup>

This started the pattern of urbanization which has continued in uncontrolled development up to the present.

Another variable, the ever increasing affluence for a growing portion of the population, led to an increased demand for goods and services. Accompanying this increase in wealth was the usual waste associated with the processes of production and consumption. This has been amplified by the fact that these wastes are now, more than ever, disposed of in dangerously high concentrations due to the high density of development in urban areas.

As the world population has increased, urban centres have become even more concentrated and a greater demand has been placed on production and exploitation of natural resources. In addition, the past century has seen a steady increase in real and median incomes. All of these factors contribute to the problem of environmental degradation through the accompanying excess of filth and refuse. Moncrief notes that a strong trend toward democratization was also evident very early in the struggle for nationhood. He implies that the transfer of the concept of democracy as

embodied in French thought, to North America during colonization was the major step in the direction of private land ownership, which is another of the variables. The development of private land ownership was a very slow process in Europe whereas,

In America...national policy from the outset was designed to convey ownership of the land and other natural resources into the hands of its citizenry. Thomas Jefferson was perhaps more influential in crystalizing this<sup>25</sup> philosophy in the new nation than anyone else.

Jefferson wrote that "the earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on." This common stock should best be distributed as widely as possible, because "the small land holders are the most precious part of the state."<sup>26</sup>

The point which Moncrief makes is that through democracy, the nation's natural resources fell under the control not of a few aristocrats but rather went to many citizens. As a result, the decisions which ultimately destroy the environment are made not only by public officials, corporations and engineers but by, millions of private owners of natural resources.

George Grant suggests that North America is also unlike Europe in that it never had any other traditions besides an optimistic spirit of technological progress, expansion and the conquest of nature.

The older empires had some residual traditions from before the age of progress - the French more, the British less. The United States is the only society that has none. The American supremacy is identified with the belief that...the most important human activity is the pursuit of those sciences which issue in the conquest of human and non-human nature.<sup>27</sup>

Moncrief, like Frederick Jackson Turner, also believed that the American spirit of conquest and expansion, which was facilitated by technological progress, was born out of the Western frontier.

Many of the natural resources that are now highly valued were originally perceived more as obstacles than as assets. Forests needed to be cleared to permit farming. Marshes needed to be drained. Rivers needed to be controlled. Wildlife often represented a competitive threat in addition to being a source of food. Sod was considered a nuisance - to be burned, plowed, or otherwise destroyed to permit 'desirable' use of the land.<sup>28</sup>

These obstacles all stood in the way of human control. This frontier thesis drew the sharp distinction between what is nature and what is culture, what is savage and what is civilized. It was seen as an obligation to tame all that was wild and control all that was free. Another closely associated perception was that of resources as being inexhaustible. This was a prevalent attitude until the closing of the frontier, when the first ripple of the conservationist movement reached the White House in 1890 and stimulated government action under the guidance of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot.



Having examined some of the proposed variables making up the cultural basis for the environmental crisis, it appears that there is some validity to Moncrief's scepticism of the simplicity of White's model. Moncrief's efforts might be viewed as a defence of Judeo-Christian tradition with respect to its association with environmental degradation.

This thesis shares Moncrief's view that the extent and manner in which White has held Judeo-Christian tradition responsible for the environmental crisis is unwarranted. At the same time, however, it appears that, in some way, each of the cultural variables identified by Moncrief has sought to legitimize itself through that tradition or relied on it in some way to create a socio-economic and political context in which it could develop and eventually manifest itself in a secularized form which no longer recognized such fundamental biblical principles as the following:

- 1) land ultimately belongs to God and therefore is not truly an owned commodity;
- 2) people are stewards of God's gift (the Land) and are to act in God's best interests which also implies the best interests of his children to whom the creator has also willed the land;<sup>29</sup>

- 3) nature comes from God, cannot be apart from God, and is capable of bearing the "glory" of God.<sup>30</sup>

This thesis does not, however, argue that Western environmental despotism has in no way been influenced by ecologically problematic interpretations of biblical teaching. In the following chapter, the association of Judeo-Christian tradition with the environmental crisis will be explored further, by way of a discussion of problematic interpretive positions.

## 2.4 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Michael Laurie, An Introduction to Landscape Architecture (New York: Elsevier North Holland Inc., 1975), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Donald W. Cox, Pioneers of Ecology (Maplewood, N. J.: Hammond Inc., 1971), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 217.

<sup>4</sup>A. S. Boughey, Man and the Environment (New York: MacMillan, 1970), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>P. R. and A. H. Ehrlich, Population, Resources, Environment (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1970), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1962), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Ian McHarg, "Values, Process, and Form," In The Ecological Conscience: Values for Survival. Edited by R. Disch. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup>Hendrik Aay, "Confronting the Ecological Crisis: The Kingdom of God in Geographical Perspective," Vanguard (Nov., 1972), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>The modern dualism between humanity and the natural world will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. See 3.3 (The Modern Period).

<sup>10</sup>Robert L. Smith, The Ecology of Man: An Ecosystem Approach (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., Inc., 1976), p. 375.

<sup>11</sup>Aay, "Confronting the Ecological Crisis," p. 11.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>15</sup>Ian McHarg, Design With Nature (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday/Natural History Press, 1971).

<sup>16</sup>Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," Science (155, 1967).

<sup>17</sup>Arnold Toynbee, "The Genesis of Pollution," Horizon (XV, No. 3, 1973).

<sup>18</sup>Lewis W. Moncrief, "The Cultural Basis for Our Environmental Crisis," Science (170, 1970), p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>Rene Dubos, "Franciscan Conservation Versus Benedictine Stewardship." In A God Within (N. Y.: Scribners, 1972), p. 159-161.

<sup>20</sup>R. V. Young, "Christianity and Ecology," National Review (Dec. 20, 1974), p. 1456.

<sup>21</sup>Moncrief, "The Cultural Basis," p. 32.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>26</sup>John Hart, The Spirit of the Earth: A Theology of the Land (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1984), p. 88.

<sup>27</sup>George Grant, Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), pp. 71-72.

<sup>28</sup>Moncrief, "The Cultural Basis," pp. 34-35.

<sup>29</sup>Hart, The Spirit of the Earth.

<sup>30</sup>Nancy W. Denig, "On Values Revisited: A Judeo-Christian Theology of Man and Nature," Landscape Journal (Fall, 1985), p. 102.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL PROBLEMS IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE GOD-MAN-NATURE THEME

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, representatives from various fields including ecology, philosophy and history have suggested that Western society's environmental degradation is associated with interpretations of the biblical portrayal of humanity's relationship with the natural world. The present thesis supports Lewis Moncrief's rejection of the simplistic hypothesis put forth by Lynn White Jr. that the tradition of biblical faith is the single most important cause of the West's current environmental crisis.

This is almost surely an exaggeration, and Lewis Moncrief is surely correct in arguing that it is in addition a dangerous exaggeration because those who accept it at face value will likely miss the significance of other, more important causes. He argues convincingly for several ways in which capitalism, democracy, urbanization, affluence, overpopulation, and private possession of resources all contribute in ways relatively unconnected with our religious heritage.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, this thesis shares Millard Schumaker's concern that apologists for Judeo-Christianity should not accept Moncrief's defence too quickly. "In addition to the non-religious factors Moncrief has discussed, there are also some clearly and distinctly religious contributions to the problem."<sup>2</sup>

This thesis argues that the problems in environmental ethics (both Christian and secular) stem from conceptual errors. That is to say that they are based on problematic concepts of nature and its relationship to God and humanity, which tend to legitimize human despotism. While this chapter does not intend to provide exhaustive documentation of the historical interpretive problems in the God-man-nature theme,<sup>3</sup> it offers a sampling of some of the major interpretive issues which have, to varying degrees, contributed to the current dilemma in environmental ethics. Among the types of interpretive problems which will be addressed are those which: 1) promote a dualism between the physical and metaphysical realm, thereby alienating God from the natural world; 2) evoke a perception of the natural world as being inherently evil; 3) encourage anthropocentrism and the dualism between humanity and the natural world; and 4) objectify and secularize nature on the basis of that dualism, ultimately leading to a nihilistic perception of nature. It should be noted that the yardstick by which the interpretive issues in this chapter are measured is drawn from the following two chapters.

The interpretive problems will be discussed under three general time periods: 1) The Pre-Modern Period (from the time of the early Christian church, through the Middle Ages), 2) the transition between medieval and modern times

(the rise of Renaissance humanism and the Protestant Reformation), and 3) the Modern Period (from the beginnings of modern science and the Age of Enlightenment, into the age of mechanization and the nineteenth century coalition of science and technology).

### 3.1 The Pre-Modern Period

#### 3.1.1 Anticomic Dualism: An Alien God and an Evil Earth

Any discussion on the biblical interpretation of the early Christian church must acknowledge the Greek philosophical context in which that interpretation took place. To the philosophically oriented Greeks, the content of the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) were of little interest. They contained stories of a physically dependent existence; a humanity created from the earth, the promise of a land to God's people, salvation from physical oppression, the provision of daily bread and water to a wandering people, etc.. For the well educated Greek mind such things were of little significance intellectually, much less spiritually.

Among the numerous schools of philosophy that flourished in the Greco-Roman world, the most influential was that system which is associated with Plato (427-347 B.C.) a pupil of Socrates.

The leading doctrine of Platonism is the view that true reality is found, not in the objects of sense, but in the "idea" or "form" which lies behind each class of objects and of which they are but unsubstantial shadows. By grasping and participating in the eternal forms, which belong to the higher world, the soul attains its true well-being and is lifted above the flux of "becoming." The soul's eternal home is in the world beyond the senses, whereas the body with its sensual life is but its prisonhouse and grave.<sup>4</sup>

Stoicism was another influential philosophical system founded by Zeno of Citium in Cyprus (approx. 336-263 B.C.).

Central to its teaching was the belief that:

Pervading the whole of the material order is divine Reason, and man's duty is to live in accord with this Reason or Natural Law. The soul is a divine spark or seed of the universal Reason, imprisoned within the body. Man, thanks to his soul, can rise above adverse circumstances and in the face of<sub>5</sub> difficulties can maintain a dignified tranquility.

Implicit in this was the Stoic belief that the irrational exists only for the sake of the rational, thus permitting humans to do with non-human nature as they pleased with no moral constraint.<sup>6</sup>

A third significant system which evolved as a philosophical/religious movement was Gnosticism. It became a prominent force during the first two centuries of the Christian era and reached its climax in the third century. The Gnostics' fundamental conviction was that the earth and everything within it is evil. Thus, they stressed an



antithesis between the material and the spiritual universe. "The spiritual element in man could receive redemption only through gnosis, 'spiritual enlightenment,' which was supposedly revealed knowledge of God and the origin and destiny of mankind."<sup>7</sup> Hans Jonas summarizes the Gnostic distinction between humanity and the natural world as follows:

Gnosticism...removes man, in virtue of his essential belonging to another realm, from all sameness with the world, which now is nothing but bare "world," and confronts him with its totality as the absolute different. Apart from his accessory outer layers contributed by the world, man by his inner nature is acosmic; to such a one, all the world is indifferently alien. Where there is ultimate otherness of origin, there can be kinship, neither with the whole nor any part of the universe. The self is kindred only to other human selves in the world -- and to the transmundane God, with whom the non-mundane center of the self can enter into communication.<sup>8</sup>

Like the other two philosophical systems, the Gnostic message of an alien God and an evil earth stood as a challenge to biblical faith.

Since it was largely to a Greek populace that the early Christian church sought to proclaim the gospel, its evangelists often attempted to explain the good news of salvation in terms that were intelligible and meaningful to their philosophically oriented listeners. Thus, many early interpreters were led to explain the Scriptures in the terms of the most sophisticated forms of metaphysical discussion

of their time. Unfortunately, the biblical message of redemption, as a holistic healing of the complete God-man-nature relationship, easily became distorted into an esoteric faith which understood salvation in terms of rising above and beyond the world of nature.<sup>9</sup>

Although selected passages in the Bible could and were extracted in order to convey a "gospel" which had a similar tone to the abstract "other-worldly" systems of Greek thought, such interpreters faced enormous problems in reconciling these systems of thought with the wider canonical context. Marcion (d. 160 A.D.), for example, adhered to Gnostic thinking when he introduced his theory of two Gods.<sup>10</sup> For Marcion, it was impossible to consider the "malevolent" God who created the world (which the Gnostics believed to be evil) to be the same God who is the father of Jesus Christ who redeems humanity "from the world." Marcion rejected the Old Testament as a Christian book and also rejected the parts of the New Testament whose authority, in his opinion rested upon their reference to the Old Testament.

Another, somewhat less radical, contortion which some interpreters used to give a "spiritual" meaning to otherwise "meaningless, physical" stories was allegory. Philo used allegory for apologetic reasons in order to demonstrate that

the insights of Judaism, properly understood, do not differ from the highest insight of Greek philosophy. As a guide to the application of allegorical thought he believed that

...there are certain situations in which the literal sense of a passage must be denied. In the most common instance of this denial, passages containing anything unworthy of God must be interpreted allegorically...<sup>11</sup>

An example of such allegorization is found in the teachings of Origen (ca. 185-254 A.D.). In criticising Origen, Isho'dad took issue with his suggestion that the Psalms and Prophets who spoke about the captivity and return of the people of Israel ought to be understood as the captivity of the soul from truth and its return to faith.<sup>12</sup> For those such as Origen, who had a low opinion of the material world, allegory was a means of reconciling the physical, material aspects of biblical revelation with the acosmic metaphysics of Greek thought.<sup>13</sup>

It should not be assumed that the influence of Greek thought went unchecked in the early Christian church. While the anti-cosmic influence of such individuals as Marcion and Origen is still apparent today, they met with harsh opposition from the early church. Marcion's theory of two Gods led to his rejection as a heretic. The same fate was shared by Origen whose use of allegory obscured God's revelatory activity in the material world. Early historical

exegetes referred to him as "the impious Origen of Alexandria [whose allegorical exegesis]...leads to impiety, blasphemy and falsehood."<sup>14</sup> Among the problematic aspects of Origen's theology was the heavy influence of the Stoic view that the irrational exists only for the sake of the rational.<sup>15</sup>

One of the most noteworthy early Christian defenders of the faith who took up the challenge of assimilation with Hellenistic thought was Irenaeus (ca. 130-200 A.D.). In particular, he took issue with the anticosmic dualism of the Gnostics and others such as Origen. In describing the heart of Irenaeus' motives for his opposition, Paul Santmire suggests that

As a defender of the faith and a witness to its promise, Irenaeus could not countenance the Gnostics' rejection of the Creator God of the Old Testament, nor their postulate of an entirely alien, passive deity who was utterly removed from the material order of every day experience, nor their<sup>16</sup> scorn and rejection of that material order.

Instead, Irenaeus suggested that the Scriptures revealed the world of nature as humanity's God-given home which was blessed, embraced and cared for by the very God who took on flesh in order to redeem a fallen humanity, thereby also initiating a final renewal of the whole creation.

Irenaeus's theology, at its deepest levels, is an exposition of what can be called creation history. His thought begins with a picture of God's act of bringing the whole creation into being, to the end

that God might bring all he has created to final fulfillment, through an all-encompassing history. In the middle of this comprehensive creation history, Irenaeus then sees the figure of the Incarnate Word who -- as the eternal Logos, together with the Spirit of God -- is the ever-present life-giving principle of creation history and who -- as the Logos become flesh -- moves the world creation decisively toward the goal of fulfilling the original divine intention for creation.<sup>17</sup>

It is worth noting that in contrast to the anticosmic theologies of Origen and Marcion, the theological framework of Irenaeus shows a much greater continuity and inter-relationship between the Old and New Testaments. It deals with an active God who interacts with his whole creation (human and non-human) throughout history, from its inception to its final fulfilment.

### 3.1.2 Medieval Allegorization: Alienation From Nature

The early Middle Ages were characterized by political instability, widespread violence and a scarcity of resources required for survival. In describing the perception of the natural world during this time, the historian Charles Wood wrote:

With low population, scattered settlements, and impenetrable forests, Europe was not a place which easily gave rise to the notion that man was the master of his environment. On the contrary the immensity of an untamed nature made it appear that people, far from controlling the world around them, were in fact held in thrall by it.<sup>18</sup>

It was a time which was characterized by fear and anxiety. Instead of affirming nature's beauty and divine glory as was

done by Irenaeus and also by the mature Augustine, the general understanding of nature during these centuries followed in the vein of Origen's anticosmic allegorization. The natural world was conceived primarily as a system of symbols, pointing toward human virtues or to other-worldly mysteries of human redemption. Thus, the Middle Ages saw the presence of numerous moralizing handbooks on the interpretation of animals, plants and rocks to identify their symbolic meanings.<sup>19</sup> As Glacken observes, the medieval significance of the ant lay in its representation of high standard of prudence and industry. The bee's service to humans carried its own moral example because it labours for others; less enthusiasm, however, was shown for the spider, whose physical appearance symbolized self-centeredness. Similar morals were drawn from observations of the habits of the asp, the dog and the fox.<sup>20</sup> The latter, for some, still symbolizes slyness in our time. While the material world was considered to have symbolic meaning, the value of nature in this allegorical sense, lay in its representation of something other than itself. As we have already seen in the discussion of Origen's thought, allegory was often used as a means of establishing a basis for a relationship between the physical world and the "spiritual" (metaphysical) realm, which was otherwise thought to be tenuous or discontinuous.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it

seems that, in a sense, the dualism and alienation of nature, which had characterized the allegorization of Origen persisted in the Middle Ages.

Santmire observes that the anti-cosmic schema of Origen was essentially reproduced by John the Scot (ca. 810-77), who taught that

God had not originally intended his creative power to descend down the hierarchy of being as far as corruptible matter. The human creature had originally been intended by God to have a spiritual body only, without animal needs.<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, John envisioned redemption as involving the complete elimination of physical matter and, in the vein of Origen's thought, an acosmic resurrection of the body to a wholly spiritualized, sexless state.<sup>23</sup>

This medieval trend of allegorization of, and alienation from, nature was counterbalanced by several other medieval influences which stressed a more deeply rooted continuity between the divine and the created. One of these was the influence of Aristotelian thinking, especially as it was expressed in the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Unlike Platonism, whose doctrine, as we have already discussed, held that true reality or meaning is not found in the material world (objects of sense) but in the idea, Aristotelian thinking suggested a more teleological perception of the natural world. This perception was one in

which the world of nature was filled with purpose, vitality and meaning.<sup>24</sup> We may note that this meaning went beyond mere allegorical symbolism. Clarence Glacken describes the general characteristics of Aristotle's teleology as follows:

Everything is done for an end; the cosmos, although eternal, is the result of planning. Recurrences in the cosmic order are evidences of plan and purpose -- and thus of artisanship.<sup>25</sup>

Santmire and Glacken have observed that the influence of Aristotle is a thoroughgoing one in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*.<sup>26</sup> While Thomas' is a rather complex and also ambiguous theology of nature, the teleological perception of nature as doing nothing in vain, characteristic of Aristotle's thought, is also evident in Thomas'. We can see this in the nature of his assertion that

...the universe must be looked upon as an organic whole, each of whose parts exists for its own particular end...Nature is not a reflection of sin; the cosmos, a creation of God, reflects his glory and proves his goodness.<sup>27</sup>

Another influence whose effect might be considered as a counterbalance to those medieval perceptions which promoted alienation from nature is that of Western monasticism. In particular, we shall take note of the Benedictine tradition, which has been celebrated by scholars such as Rene Dubos and Lewis Mumford as an example for ecological responsibility and creative, informed stewardship.<sup>28</sup> This tradition has formed the basis of Dubos' claim that Judeo-Christian



peoples were among the first to develop a large-scale and pervasive concern for land management and an ethic of nature.<sup>29</sup> Santmire characterizes the Benedictine spirit as

a practical befriending of nature, and will to work with nature for the sake of human betterment within a divinely ordered cosmos. The wasteland of the early Middle Ages in this sense, in the Benedictine mind, had become a garden.<sup>30</sup>

Practical befriending suggests an idea of mutual interdependence. The Benedictine view can be seen as one in which the world of nature fulfilled human need while at the same time the Benedictine steward cared for God's world.<sup>31</sup> Glacken observes that saintliness, in medieval practice of the West as the East, was associated with kindness to animals.<sup>32</sup> The same conclusions can be drawn from C. W. Hume's collection of medieval Roman liturgy which contains various benedictions on stables and sick domestic animals and the *Benedictio Deprecatoria* on pests.<sup>33</sup> What becomes very clear in this monastic tradition is the view that neither man nor God is alienated from nature. While terms such as practical befriending suggest unity and coexistence between human and non-human creation, White has emphasized the monastic notion of human practicality and mastery as a concern. He suggests that a more helpful model of the human relationship is found in the Franciscan tradition.

Francis tried to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God's

creatures. With him the ant is no longer simply a homily for the lazy, flames a sign of the thrust of the soul toward union with God; now they are Brother Ant and Sister Fire, praising the Creator in their own ways as Brother Man does in his.<sup>34</sup>

What White highlights in Francis' teaching is his apparent calling to the whole creation in order to join with him in praising God the creator and sustainer. We are reminded here, in a sense, of the ancient Psalmists (e.g. Psalm 19:1-6; 69:43; 148:3-10). His love for and sense of unity with non-human creation as the mutual recipients of the overflowing goodness and care of God are expressed in his sermon to the birds.

My little sisters, the birds, many are the bonds that unite us to God. And your duty is to praise Him everywhere and always....Praise Him likewise for the food He provides you without your working for it, the songs He has taught you, for your numbers that His blessing has multiplied, for your species which He preserved in the ark of olden time, and for the realm of the air He has reserved for you.

God sustains you without having to sow or reap. He gives you fountains and streams to drink from, mountains and hills in which to take refuge, and tall trees in which to build your nests. Although you did not know how to sew or spin, He gives you and your little ones the clothing you need.

How the Creator must love you to grant you such favours! So, my sister birds, do not be ungrateful, but continually praise Him who showers blessings upon you.<sup>35</sup>

White suggests the Franciscan interpretation of the God-man-nature relationship to be the more helpful one in

the contemporary search for an ethic of nature. Mumford and Dubos, on the other hand, seem to favour the Benedictine approach since it appears to be a more practical rather than contemplative model.

The Benedictine and Franciscan traditions can be seen as complementary just as the command in Genesis for man to exercise stewardlike dominion over creation is complemented by the Psalmists' call for the whole creation to join in worshipping God, the creator and sustainer. The common quality of both of these monastic traditions is their countering of the anticosmic alienation of God and humanity from the natural world which characterized numerous other interpretive traditions. It should not, however, be assumed that the Benedictine and Franciscan traditions had a universal influence. As Santmire continuously points out, the history of the Christian interpretation of the God-man-nature theme is characterized by ambiguity. Interpretation during the Middle Ages was no exception.

### 3.2. Transition

#### 3.2.1 The Renaissance: Upsurge of Humanism

The tremendous political and social changes that swept over Europe following the Middle Ages were accompanied by new ideas concerning the nature of humanity and its place in

the universe. Thus, the Renaissance transition from medieval to modern times witnessed the upsurge of humanism. Thomas Greer defines humanism as "...a view that puts the human person (humanus) at the center of things and stresses the individual's creative, rational and esthetic powers."<sup>36</sup> As has already been suggested, the medieval intellect, in general, was steeped in an "other-worldly", God-centered understanding of the universe. The Renaissance humanists rejected this view and the asceticism, inhibitions and poverty which were associated with it in favour of exploring the culture of the ancient classical world.

To Renaissance humanists the classical view of man was the proper view. They, like the ancients, saw man as an aspiring egoist whose interests were centered in the here and now. If the humanists seldom renounced religion, they tended to regard it as a formality or<sup>37</sup> as an extension of man's knowledge and power.

The ideas of humanism were a challenge to the Christian faith since they ran counter to many of its teachings. Of major concern to the present discussion was the elevated status of humankind in relation to the world and the growing confidence in human achievement. There was much less emphasis on human dependence on the natural world or on divine assistance. Thus, theocentrism was replaced by an arrogant form of anthropocentrism and a sense of self-sufficiency. Greer observes that:

...(especially in the north) a Christian humanism developed alongside this secular humanism. Some pious scholars shared the growing enthusiasm for

the classics and ancient languages. They shared, too, the heightened appreciation of man's capabilities, especially his powers of reason and creativity. But they insisted that all human powers were a gift of God -- and that this life, though <sup>38</sup>rewarding, fell short of the glory of heaven.

While the Church was in many ways influenced by the emergence of Renaissance humanism, secular humanism also showed a curious interest in Christianity both as a religion and as a philosophy. Giovanni Pico, Count of Mirandola (1463-94), serves as a perfect example of the brilliant, young, restless intellectual of the Renaissance and also demonstrates the merging of various religious traditions including Christianity with philosophy. Karl F. Thompson informs us that Pico's background included a knowledge of Greek and Latin classics, as well as the Hebrew, Chaldee and Arabic languages.

Pico took all knowledge as his province and attempted to show the truth of Christianity as both a religion and a philosophy by bringing into intellectual harmony the traditional <sup>39</sup>classics and the philosophies of Hebraism and Islam.

Implicit in Pico's "Oration on the Dignity of Man," we find several problematic statements.

At last it seems to me I have come to understand why man is the most fortunate of creatures and consequently worthy of all admiration ...God the Father, the supreme Architect, had already built this cosmic home we behold...At last the best of artisans...took man as a creature of indeterminate nature and, assigning him a place in the middle of the world, addressed thus: 'neither a fixed abode nor a form that is thine alone nor any function

peculiar to thyself have we given thee, Adam, to the end that according to thy longing and according to thy judgement thou mayest have and possess what abode, what form and what functions thou thyself shalt desire. The nature of all other beings is limited and constrained within the bounds of laws prescribed by Us. Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed thee, shall ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature. We have set thee at the world's center that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honour, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgement, to be reborn into higher forms, which are divine.'<sup>40</sup>

As the discussion in the following chapter will explain, the biblical concept of human dominion over the rest of creation not only endowed humankind with a certain dignity, it also involved an element of humility, accountability and servitude. Pico's "Oration on the Dignity of Man," however, illustrates an interpretation which concerns itself with the relationship of humanity to the world only insofar as it emphasizes human ascendancy and a perception of a world which is centered around humankind. With a certain tone of arrogance, Pico portrays the human as a self-sufficient being influenced neither by God nor by the world of nature. Instead, humanity is said to be of indeterminate nature, and, therefore, determining its own

destiny and molding its own image.<sup>41</sup> Central to Pico's discussion is the emphasis on freedom of choice and human reason. It is these qualities which form the basis of his understanding of human uniqueness. Rationality is hailed as the primary quality which, if nurtured, enables humankind to transcend the natural world.

If rational, he will grow into a heavenly being. If intellectual, he will be an angel and the son of God. And if, happy in the lot of no created thing, he withdraws into the center of his own unity, his spirit, made one with God, in the solitary darkness of God, who is set above all things, shall surpass them all.<sup>42</sup>

His message clearly echoes that of Stoicism with its implications that human duty is to live in accord with divine Reason or Natural Law thus attaining a dignified tranquility beyond the world of the senses.

If sensitive he will become brutish...it is not the bark that makes the plant but its senseless and insentient nature; neither is it the hide that makes the beast of burden but its irrational, sensitive soul...For if you see one abandoned to his appetites crawling on the ground, it is a plant and not a man you see...If you see a philosopher determining all things by means of right reason, him you shall reverence: he is a heavenly being and not of this earth. If you see a pure contemplator, one aware of his body and confined to the inner reaches of the mind, he is neither an earthly nor a heavenly being; he is a more reverent divinity vested with human flesh...Let us disdain earthly things...hasten to that court which is beyond the world and nearest to the godhead...Then let us fill our well-prepared and purified soul with the light of natural philosophy, so that we may at last perfect her in the knowledge of things divine.<sup>43</sup>

From Pico's oration, we get a sampling of the general anthropocentrism and the emphasis on classical philosophy and abstract thought which characterized Renaissance humanism. The expression of this mentality manifests itself not only in the literature, art and architecture of the time, but also in the Renaissance landscape. McHarg identifies early examples, found in Italy, which was the epicenter of this expression.

Bramante, Ligorio, Raphael, Palladio and Vignola created the symbolic expression of humanism upon the land, to be seen in the Villa Medici, Poggio a Cajano, the Villa d'Este and the Villa Lante, the Villa Madama and the Boboli Gardens and, in the final phase, the Villa Aldobrandini and Mondragone. In these the authority of man was made visible by the imposition of a simple Euclidean geometry upon the landscape, and this is seen to increase with the period. Man imposes his simple, entertaining illusion of order, accomplished with great art, upon an unknowing and uncaring nature. The garden is offered as proof of man's superiority.<sup>44</sup>

McHarg observes that, about a century later, the locus of the humanist expression on the land had moved to France.

Here the same anthropomorphic simplicity was applied at larger scale upon a flat and docile landscape. So at Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles one sees the French baroque expression through the works of Andre Le Notre, the zenith of Euclid upon the land. Louis XIV lay transected by the twin axes at Versailles [Fig. 7], king by divine right, the ordered gardens show testimony to the divinity of man and his supremacy over a base and subject nature. Or so it seemed.<sup>45</sup>



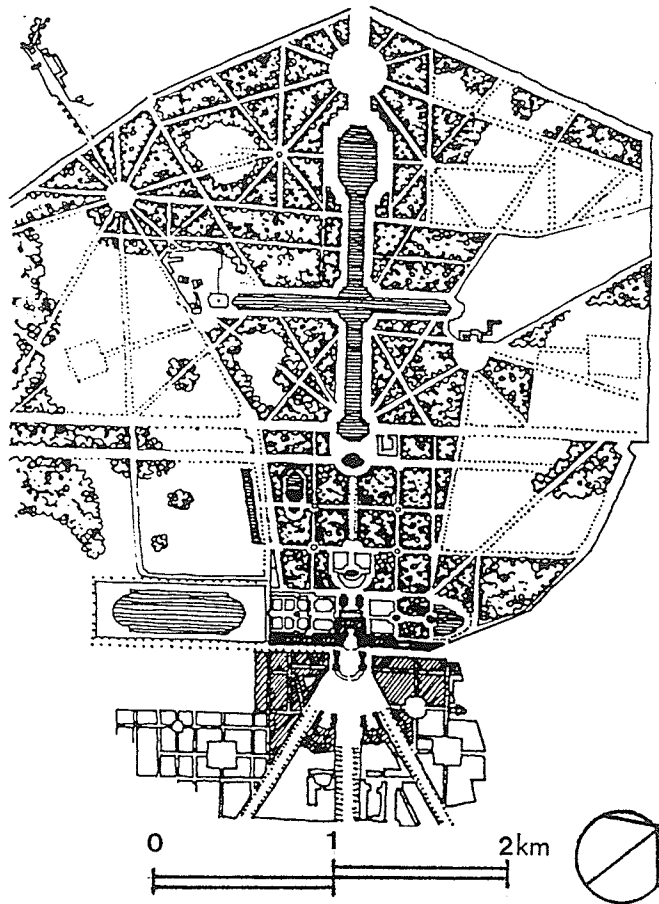


Fig. 4 Plan of Versailles (1662-65)

Thus, the secularized concept of human dominion over creation was perceived as the human imposition of abstract, humanly contrived, forms over nature. The arrangement of the natural landscape in a simple geometry became a symbolic metaphysical expression of a submissive and orderly world whose creator was humankind.

### 3.2.2 Reformation: Anthropocentric Dynamics of Grace

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was another significant event in the transition from medieval to

modern times. Paul Santmire offers some valuable insights on the ambiguity of the early Reformers' outlook on the God-man-nature theme.<sup>46</sup> He observes that the inaugural question of the Reformation was Luther's: "How can I find a gracious God?" While the form of the question was similar to that which was asked in the Middle Ages, "How can I ascend and finally be with God?", the Reformers insisted that "you cannot ascend and finally be with God -- God has descended to be with you, finally."

In the Middle Ages...the goal of human existence was often construed in terms of the Christian's pilgrimage within this lowly earth to the beatific vision or union with God in the heavenly Jerusalem above. Major trends in medieval thought about redemption, whether they were articulated by a Thomas, a Bonaventure, or a Dante, were all shaped,<sup>47</sup> in a thoroughgoing way, by the metaphor of ascent.

The Reformers responded by arguing that human striving for salvation was in vain. Through his grace, God had supplied all that was required for human salvation through Christ. The word became flesh at the lowly level of human existence itself. Santmire observes that, although the Reformers' understanding of the dynamics of grace materially accented the divine descent, formally they were still primarily concerned with God and humanity and the dynamics of human salvation. Thus, the focal elements of their theologies remained theanthropocentric.

Luther and Calvin present us with a vision of God and humanity in dynamic interpersonal communion,

established by the gracious Word of God. This theanthropocentric focus of their thought reflects Western theology's increasing preoccupation with human salvation -- soteriology -- in the post-Augustinian centuries.<sup>48</sup>

While we have highlighted the issue of theanthropocentrism, as a problematic aspect of the Reformation we may also note that it was the Reformation tradition that released the concept of the "individual," an idea which, as we will see in the following section, developed into the modern concept of the "self."

While the central concern of the Reformers' theology might be considered somewhat problematic in that it encompassed only one aspect of the triangular God-man-nature relationship (God-human), the circumferential elements in their thought affirm a more ecological understanding of the triangular theme.

As we survey the theology of the Reformers, attending to its circumference as well as to its center, we do encounter a number of striking attestations to the glory and the power of God in nature, to nature's intrinsic wonder and beauty, and, especially for Luther, to humanity's solidarity with nature, which suggest a theocentric-ecological rather than a merely anthropocentric-soteriological reading of nature's being and value in the greater scheme of things.<sup>49</sup>

We shall briefly sample the circumferential thoughts of both Luther and Calvin. In Calvin's writing we see a

lyrical expression of his perception of the natural world's capacity to bear divine glory in its very being.

In every part of the world, in heaven and on earth, he has written and as it were engraven the glory of his power, goodness, wisdom and eternity....For all creatures, from the firmament even to the centre of the earth, could be witnesses and messengers of his glory...For the little singing birds sang of God, the animals acclaimed him, the elements feared and the mountains resounded with him, the rivers and springs threw glances toward him, the grasses and flowers smiled.<sup>50</sup>

Calvin urged believers not to turn their attention immediately from nature to God, but to contemplate as well, the beauty and goodness of nature itself.

While we contemplate in all creatures, as in a mirror, those immense riches of his wisdom, justice, goodness and power, we should not run them over cursorily, and, so to speak, with a fleeting glance, but we should ponder them at length, turn them over in our minds seriously and faithfully, and recollect them repeatedly.<sup>51</sup>

Luther held that the redemption of the believer through Christ, provides him or her with "new and glorious perceptions of the wonders of nature itself. Redeemed existence, in other words, brings with it a new and more vital relationship with nature."<sup>52</sup> As Luther explains:

We are now living in the dawn of the future life; for we are beginning to regain a knowledge of the creation, a knowledge forfeited by the fall of Adam. Now we have a correct view of the creatures, more so, I suppose, than they have in the papacy. Erasmus does not concern himself with this; it interests little how the fetus is made in the womb....But by God's mercy we can begin to

recognize His wonderful works and wonders also<sup>53</sup> in flowers when we ponder his might and goodness.

Elsewhere he comments:

Now if I believe in God's Son and bear in mind that He became man, all creatures will appear a hundred times more beautiful to me than before. Then I will properly appreciate the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, apples, pears, as I reflect that he is lord over and at the centre of all things.<sup>54</sup>

Excerpts such as these seem to suggest, that while the Reformation may be seen as a reflection of Western theology's increasingly anthropocentric understanding of salvation, the theologies of the Reformers also offered an element of ecological awareness.

### 3.3 The Modern Period

The elements of ecological promise which were evident in the circumferential thoughts of the Reformers diminished in the Reformation tradition which followed. Again, we shall consider some of the external cultural forces which decisively influenced this tradition.

#### 3.3.1 The Scientific Revolution: Accent on Human Reason

The Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the development of Newtonian science all contributed to a changing concept of nature. As was discussed earlier, the Renaissance saw the upsurge of humanism which accented human reason and freedom of choice as those characteristics which

distinguished humanity from the natural world. A great deal of confidence in human reason was associated with the tremendous scientific discoveries which took place after the Middle Ages. Individuals such as Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) all contributed to a new understanding of the world. With the 16th and 17th century invention or improvement of instruments for precise scientific observation, as well as the sharpening of mathematics, that indispensable tool of the mind, the founders of modern science displayed the ability to see old things in new ways. As a result, a new cosmology emerged. Shattered was the geocentric Aristotelian system adapted by Ptolemy and later expressed by Aquinas. Galileo's was quite literally an earth-moving discovery.

The comprehensible, closed universe of the Greek and Christian worlds vanished forever; earth and man were now seen as wanderers through the dark infinitude of space.<sup>55</sup>

Galileo's earlier findings had discredited Aristotle's picture of the heavens. His subsequent efforts in the study of motion went further to overthrow the entire Aristotelian cosmic scheme including a rejection of its mechanics. As such, Galileo aroused the modern interest in mass and motion which eventually opened the door to the industrial-mechanical approach to nature.

Although the most significant accomplishments of the scientific revolution were in the fields of astronomy and mechanics, the whole frontier of conceptual knowledge was making rapid advances. As Couze Venn observes, the work of Galileo can be seen as the symbolic turning point in the transformation of the basis of Western rationality because it summarizes the redefinition of scientific intelligibility that marks modern science, namely through the elaboration of a conceptual system in which rational necessity replaced physical causality.<sup>56</sup> The development of science as a methodology was, perhaps, one of the most significant of the conceptual advances which followed. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Rene Descartes (1596-1650) are the two outstanding figures in this development.

Both men expressed a great confidence in human reason and in scientific progress. For Bacon, knowledge was the means of acquiring control over that which was known. Thus, the natural sciences when applied practically were perceived as the means by which to assume control over the natural world and thereby exercise human dominion.<sup>57</sup> His goal was clearly stated: "The enlarging of the bounds of the Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible."<sup>58</sup>

A similar aim as Bacon's was expressed in a somewhat more despotic tone by Descartes, who suggested that we should "render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature."<sup>59</sup> We may note the implications of a different sense of dominion than that which will be discussed in the following chapter. Robin Attfield argues that Descartes was no advocate of irresponsible ruthlessness and that he held that it was right to forego short-term benefits for the sake of the long-term advantage of posterity. Unlike the earlier discussion of the Benedictine concept of humanity's steward-like dominion over God's works, Descartes' notion of human mastery over its possession (nature) more closely resembles the contemporary economic principle which evolved out of the modern age namely the exploitation of an owned resource or commodity (object) by a nation or individual. We shall briefly examine two problematic aspects of the Western interpretation of the God-man-nature relationship which further legitimized this perception.

### 3.3.2 Descartes: Dualism Between the Human Mind and the Natural World

If we look back upon all of the problematic aspects of the interpretation of the God-man-nature theme, which have already been discussed, they all share some aspect of alienation or dualism either between God and the earth or humanity and the natural world or some variation. In



Descartes' philosophical articulation of the new world view which emerged out of the scientific revolution and flourished in the Age of Enlightenment, we find the culmination of the dualistic disruption of the God-man-nature theme.

Keith Thomas reminds us that the justification of the belief in a fundamental difference between humanity and other forms of life went back beyond Christianity to the Greeks.

According to Aristotle, the soul comprises three different elements: the nutritive soul, which was shared by man with vegetables; the sensitive soul, which was shared by animals; and the intellectual or rational soul, which was peculiar to man. This doctrine had been taken over by medieval scholastics and fused with the Judaeo-Christian teaching that man was made in the image of God (Genesis i. 27). Instead of representing man as merely a superior animal, it<sup>60</sup> elevated him to a wholly different status...

Other human attributes which contributed to the traditional Western distinction between humans and other life forms were speech, "a quality which John Ray described as 'so peculiar to man that no beast could ever attain it,'"<sup>61</sup> free agency and moral responsibility, and the "immortal soul."<sup>62</sup>

These human traits were all important aspects of the doctrine developed and made famous by Rene Descartes from 1630 on.

This was the view that animals were mere machines or automata, like clocks, capable of complex behavior, but wholly incapable of speech, reasoning,<sup>63</sup> or, on some interpretations, even sensation.

We must consider that his was a time of tremendous fascination with the movement of mass and objects. As a young man Descartes had been much impressed by the water-powered clockwork structures in Nuremberg and elsewhere.

He saw that these elaborate machines could be explained on the basis of mechanical cause and effect alone, without any appeal to conscious intention: clearly, these machines had no mind, or soul. These machines<sup>64</sup> became his primary model for the physical world.

He believed that all of physical reality was mechanical in nature and, therefore, perceived the entire spatial world as a vast machine.

The medieval perception of the world had been one of an integrated telos under divine direction. The new view of the world which was seen through telescopes, microscopes and other instruments of scientific observation was one of units, objects and particles. Rather than emphasizing cosmic holism, modern science and its philosophical articulation was reductionistic in its approach. The figurative organic world of the Middle Ages was disintegrated into separate, intrinsically unrelated, parts,

devoid of any meaning besides their expression of the physical laws which governed their movement.

While the whole spatial world was perceived as a vast machine of mechanically governed, interchangeable parts, the human being stood out in stark contrast. Within the world of "objects" was the "human subject," the one and only conscious, rational mind and soul. It was through his consciousness that the individual subject was believed to achieve a sense of autonomy not only from the external objects (nature), but also from other subjects (selves). We may note, here, that the Cartesian model of nature as an ontology of entities was later to be translated by John Locke and Immanuel Kant into a social physics which perceived society as being composed of abstract individual selves. This understanding of the individual subject, which is still prevalent today, held that consciousness not only gives the individual autonomy but also stability and unity. In spite of fragmentary experiences with external objects and other selves, the individual subject, by the agency of his consciousness remains self-identical, single -- individual.<sup>65</sup> The modern concept of the "unitary thinking subject" is most adequately articulated in Descartes' dictum, "I think, therefore I am." Explicit in Descartes' philosophy was the idea that the subject is pure non-physical, non-spatial reason (mind). The tremendous

confidence in rationality led to the assumption that, through the power of reason, the human subject could provide the "facts" (objective knowledge) about nature. A further presupposition of Cartesian thinking appears to be that nature is intrinsically nihilistic; it has meaning only insofar as human reason gives it meaning. There was a total qualitative difference between the "human subject" and the "inert objects" of the natural world. Thus, the dualism between humanity and the natural world had reached its climax.

### 3.3.3 Newton: The Secularization of Nature

The scientific trend which had started with Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo and whose methodology had been articulated by Bacon and Descartes was synthesized by Isaac Newton (1642-1727) who is credited with establishing the canon of modern scientific method. Newton was hailed by his contemporaries as a law giver, a scientific Moses.<sup>66</sup> As Alexander Pope exclaimed:

Nature and Nature's laws hid in night  
God said, "Let Newton be," and there was light!<sup>67</sup>

Here, we see the expression of the two modern assumptions that scientific knowledge enables the human subject to give the "facts" (laws) about nature, and that it is through human reason that the subject gives nature (which is otherwise meaningless) its meaning (enlightenment). The

18th century system of nature based upon Newtonian physics was considered as the apex of centuries of scientific progress and it provided a synthesized picture of nature as a mathematical-mechanical system intelligible to reason.<sup>68</sup>

We have already discussed how the modern mechanistic paradigm established an ontological barrier between humanity (subject) and the natural world (object), but this view also encouraged the dualism between God and the natural world.

John Carmody explains:

Insofar as Newtonian science seemed to depict the world as a closed mechanical system, it gave some plausibility to inferences...that God was no longer a necessary hypothesis. Newton himself retained God, though not the God of orthodox Christian faith, but by the time scientists had developed the biology and geology of the 19th century, the intellectual establishment was at best Deistic, consigning God to a vague role in the origins of the universe now quite self-sufficient.<sup>69</sup>

The phenomenon which emerged out of Newtonian science and Cartesian philosophy was a spirit of industrial (technological) progress and entrepreneurial enterprise. The scientific-philosophical doctrine tended to coalesce with the socio-economic ideology of the Bourgeoisie.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the "industrial-mechanical" view of nature is a more appropriate term than simply the mechanical view. As Lewis Mumford observes, "The power that was science and the power

that was money were, in final analysis, the same kind of power: the power of abstraction, measurement, quantification."<sup>71</sup> It was quite easy for a profit-oriented society to conceive of secularized nature as being a valueless, dead, indifferent, God-less machine,<sup>72</sup> and, therefore, open to exploitation. R. V. Young asserts that in this "post-Christian" society unbridled industrialism and a "religion of progress" have triumphed.<sup>73</sup> William Leiss has further explained that as long as Christianity remained a vital social force in Western Civilization, the notion of human dominion over the earth was interpreted in the context of a wider ethical (we might add biblical) framework. In its secularized form, this notion reveals few traces of its Judeo-Christian background.

In this latter-day guise, mastery over nature loses the element of tension resulting from the opposing poles of domination and subordination in the religiously based version and adapts a unidimensional character -- the extension of human "power" in the world."<sup>74</sup>

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that, since biblical times, there have existed a variety of interpretive positions which this thesis has identified as being ecologically problematic on the basis that they promote a dualism or dichotomy between two or more aspects of the triangular God-man-nature relationship. Although this chapter has discussed these interpretive positions under

three general time periods, its intent has not been to suggest that these periods should be characterized solely by their respective problematic perceptions. As such, the chapter has also taken note of some countervailing perceptions which have offered an element of ecological promise. While its intent was not to give an exhaustive documentation of the complex history of the interpretation of the God-man-nature theme, this chapter has attempted to take spot samples over an extended span of history in order to demonstrate that, in one form or another, such dualistic perceptions have emerged and in some cases re-emerged. While this thesis identifies the modern paradigm as the culmination of the dualistic disruption of the God-man-nature theme, it does not wish to suggest that this latter world view stands in complete isolation from previous interpretations. This thesis suggests that all of the dichotomous interpretations have potentially contributed to the West's overall failure to develop an environmentally responsive ethic.

### 3.4 Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Millard Schumaker, Appreciating our Good Earth: Toward a Pertinant Theology of Nature (Kingston, Ont.: Queen's Theological College & The Bay of Quinte Conferences, The United Church of Canada, 1980), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>For a more comprehensive review of historical interpretation of the relationship between God, humanity and the natural world see Paul Santmire, The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) and references.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1978), pp. 62-63.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. pp. 64-65.

<sup>6</sup>Robin Attfield, "Christian Attitudes to Nature," Journal of the History of Ideas, Inc. (July, 1983), p. 371.

<sup>7</sup>Metzger, The New Testament, p. 66.

<sup>8</sup>Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Problem: The Message of an Alien God, revised ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Biblical refers, here, to the wider canonical context of both the Old and New Testaments.

<sup>10</sup>Robert M. Grant with David Tracy, A short History of the Interpretation of the Bible, second ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 42-43.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. p. 53.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. p. 64-65.

<sup>13</sup>The reader should note that the issue here is not the use of allegory as an interpretive method but rather its use as a means of obscuring God's revelatory action in the material world.

<sup>14</sup>J. M. Voste, "L'oeuvre exegetique de Theodore de Mopsueste au ii<sup>e</sup> concile de Constantinople," Revue biblique 38 (1929): p. 544 ff., quoted in Grant, A short History, p. 64-65.



<sup>15</sup>John Passmore, Man's Responsibility for Nature, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 16f.

<sup>16</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 35.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Charles T. Wood, The Age of Chivalry: Manners and Morals 1000-1450 (New York: Universe Books, 1970), p. 72.

<sup>19</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 77, cf. Lynn White Jr., "Natural Science and Naturalistic Art in the Middle Ages," American Historical Review 52:3 (April 1947), pp. 421-35.

<sup>20</sup>Clarence J. Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century (Berkeley and L. A.: University of California Press, 1967), p. 205, referring to John Chrysostom.

<sup>21</sup>See this thesis, p. 46-47.

<sup>22</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 77-8, based on M. D. Chenu, Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West, ed and trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 36.

<sup>23</sup>Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol 2: Medieval Philosophy: Augustine to Bonaventure (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1962), part 2, p. 145.

<sup>24</sup>Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, pp. 48-49.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. p. 48. See also S. Sambursky, The Physical World of the Greeks, trans. Merton Dagut (New York: Collier Books, 1952), pp. 103-112.

<sup>26</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 89, and Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, pp. 232-234.

<sup>27</sup>Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Part 1, Q. 65, Art. 2, paraphrased by Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, p. 233. See also Meyrick H. Carre, Realists and Nominalists (Oxford: University Press, 1946), pp. 97-98, and Santmire, The Travail of Nature, pp. 88-90.

<sup>28</sup>Lewis Mumford, The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 263-67, and Rene Dubos, Reason Awake: Science for Man (N. Y.: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 126f.

<sup>29</sup><sup>5</sup>Rene Dubos, "Franciscan Conservation Versus Benedictine Stewardship," in A God Within (N. Y.: Scribners, 1972), p. 158.

<sup>30</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 79.

<sup>31</sup>Note that this position is similar to that which is presented in 4.4.3 (Stewardship as the Basis for Dominion), pp. 124-133.

<sup>32</sup>Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, pp. 200, 304-06.

<sup>33</sup>C. W. Hume, The Status of Animals in the Christian Religion (London, 1975), pp. 94-98, referred to in Attfield, "Christian Attitudes," p. 378.

<sup>34</sup>Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," reprinted in Paul Shepard and Daniel McKinley, eds., The Subversive Science: Essays Toward an Ecology of Man (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 350.

<sup>35</sup>Celano, Vita Prima, p. 58f. cited by Omer Englebert, St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography, trans. and ed. Edward Hutton (London: B. Oates, 1950), p. 19.

<sup>36</sup>Thomas H. Greer, A Brief History of Western Man (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), pp. 264-65.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.* p. 265.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.* p. 266.

<sup>39</sup>Karl F. Thompson, ed., Classics of Western Thought: Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation, Vol. II (N. Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Pub., 1980), p. 275.

<sup>40</sup>Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man, trans. Elizabeth L. Forbes, cited in Thompson, ed., Classics of Western Thought, p. 278.

<sup>41</sup>Compare with the discussion in the following chapter on the creation of humankind in God's image and the role of stewardship and limitations which are implied, pp. 118-123. Compare also the following discussion on the interdependence

of human and non-human creation as well as their mutual dependence on God, pp. 105-108; 113-118.

<sup>42</sup>Pico, Oration on the Dignity of Man, cited in Thompson, ed., Classics of Western Thought, p. 278.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. pp. 278-80.

<sup>44</sup>Ian L. McHarg, Design with Nature (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1971), pp. 70-71.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. p. 71.

<sup>46</sup>The following discussion is based on the observations of Santmire, The Travail of Nature, pp. 121-32.

<sup>47</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 121.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. p. 123.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. p. 128.

<sup>50</sup>John Calvin, Opera Selecta 9.793,795. Cited by Francois Wendel, Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Thought, trans. Philip Mamet (N. Y.: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 34.

<sup>51</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion 1.14.21.

<sup>52</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 131.

<sup>53</sup>Luthers Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe {Schriften} (Weimar), 1:1160. Cited by Heinrich Berkamm, Luther's World of Thought, trans. Martin H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1958), p. 184.

<sup>54</sup>Martin Luther, Sermons on the Gospel of John, p. 496.

<sup>55</sup>Greer, A Brief History, p. 353.

<sup>56</sup>Couze Venn, "The Subject of Psychology," in Julian Henriques, Wendy Holloway, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn and Valerie Walkerdine, Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Relations and Subjectivity (London: Melhues, 1984), p. 134.

<sup>57</sup>Attfield, "Christian Attitudes," p. 381.

<sup>58</sup>Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning and the New Atlantis, ed. Arthur Johnston (Oxford, 1974), p. 239.

- <sup>59</sup>Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method, Part VI, from The Philosophical Works of Descartes, trans. by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. T. R. Ross. 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1967), I, p. 119.
- <sup>60</sup>Aristotle, De Anima, referred to in Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World: A History of Modern Sensibility (N. Y.: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 30. Compare with the discussion on human creation in the image of God in 4.4.2 (Created in God's Image).
- <sup>61</sup>John Ray, Wisdom, referred to by Thomas, Man and the Natural World, p. 32.
- <sup>62</sup>Thomas, Man and the Natural World, p. 32. Soul is used here in its Greek (Platonic) meaning. Compare with the discussion of nephesh in the following chapter.
- <sup>63</sup>Thomas, Man and the Natural World, p. 33.
- <sup>64</sup>Schumaker, Appreciating our Good Earth, p. 9.
- <sup>65</sup>For a more comprehensive discussion on the social and psychological aspects of the concept of the subject, see Henriques, et al, Changing The Subject.
- <sup>66</sup>Greer, A Brief History, p. 356.
- <sup>67</sup>Alexander Pope, quoted by Daniel Day Williams, "Changing Concepts of Nature," in Ian Barbour, ed., Earth Might Be Fair (Engelwood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1972), p. 52.
- <sup>68</sup>Williams, "Changing Concepts of Nature," p. 51.
- <sup>69</sup>John Carmody, Ecology and Religion: Toward a New Christian Theology of Nature (Ramsey, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1983), p. 110.
- <sup>70</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 135.
- <sup>71</sup>Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1934), p. 25.
- <sup>72</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 135.
- <sup>73</sup>R. V. Young, "Christianity and Ecology," National Review, Dec. 20, 1974, p. 1457.
- <sup>74</sup>William Leiss, The Dominion of Nature (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p.35.

#### 4.0 THE BIBLICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD, MAN AND NATURE

The aim of this chapter is to present a sampling of the pertinent biblical material in an interpretive discussion which emphasizes the theme of unity between God-man-nature in the bible. This material will form the basis for the ethical principles developed in chapter five. The reader is reminded that the biblical material is, for some, taken to be the definitive, authoritative Word of God. For those who do not share this faith, the significance of this material lies in its representation of an important strand in the history of Western thought, affecting contemporary attitudes toward the relationship between humanity and the natural world.

#### 4.1 Reading the Bible Ecologically

Much of Western theology has been characteristically anthropocentric in its outlook towards nature (non-human creation). As the previous chapter suggested, this has especially been the case in the modern period. While there are scholarly works whose theology expresses a more holistic view, these are by far outnumbered by the works of individuals such as von Rad, Wright and who have interpreted redemption and the history of salvation as applying primarily, if not entirely, to humanity. These scholars have suggested that a concern with nature is a "secondary addition" to Israel's alleged primary focus on human

redemption.<sup>1</sup> Paul Santmire has referred to this interpretive view as the "spiritual motif". "The fundamental data of theological reflection in this case are ... God and 'the elect', or God and the whole of human kind..."<sup>2</sup> The essence of this motif is centered on the historical relationship between God and humanity. The critical prerequisite in this kind of theological reflection seems to be a certain personal or rational affinity.

This tradition of thought, with its limited focus, has its roots in an understanding of the Old Testament as primarily the story of God's covenant with a people, his liberation of the "elect", and his mighty acts throughout history. This method of reading the Old Testament neglects God's interaction with the whole of creation, God's intentions for the whole of creation, his covenant with all living things and the relationship of God's people with creation. Instead, this traditional perception has viewed nature as a passive stage on which the drama of human redemption takes place. As a result, the theological significance of non-human creation has been obscured and reduced to mere "scenery" in God's redemptive plan.<sup>3</sup> The words of Emil Brunner, who refers to the cosmic element in the Bible as "...never anything more than 'scenery' in which the history of mankind takes place," further illustrates

this point.<sup>4</sup> Wesley Granberg-Michaelson stresses that when these ecological themes are neglected in the Old Testament they become even more obscure in the New Testament.<sup>5</sup>

Santmire identifies a second biblical-theological understanding which he calls the "ecological motif."<sup>6</sup> Ecological is understood here as pertaining to a system of interrelationships between God, humanity and "nature."<sup>7</sup> Santmire uses the word ecology in a theological sense. This view does not consider humanity's relationship with God as external to or alienated from his relationship with the rest of creation. Rather, it recognizes the rootedness of human life in the natural world and its desire to celebrate God's presence and sovereignty in, with and under the whole biophysical order. The natural world becomes the interactive context within which a life of obedience to God is pursued. This ecological perspective will form the theoretical and interpretive framework for the ethical principles which will be developed in chapter five. The present chapter will seek to clarify and support the biblical basis of the ecological position.

The ecological relationship between God, humanity and creation has been graphically expressed as a triangle.

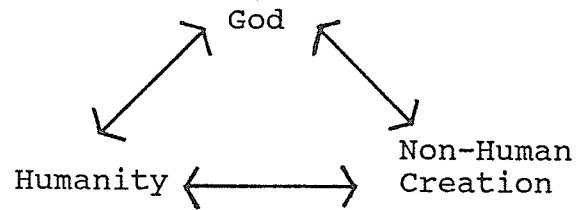


Fig. 5 Granberg-Michaelson (1984)

This diagram supports the position that theologies shaped by the ecological motif must not consider non-human creation as an "ideational epiphenomenon"<sup>8</sup> whose theological significance arises only as a result of its participation in the dynamics of what is thought to be the primary relationship between God and humanity. "Nature, rather, like God and humanity, is a theological fundamentum, given in the original moment of theological reflection."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, it is clear that there are three fundamental components to the triangular model and they are connected through three relationships. In contrast to the dichotomous interpretive positions which were presented in the previous chapter, this chapter will suggest that God's creative intent, according to the Old Testament, was for a wholesome interrelationship between all three aspects of the model. Granberg-Michaelson observes that a break in any one side of the triangle affects the other sides as well. That is to say that if, as its freedom and wilfulness



permits, humanity chooses to rebel against God, such a rebellion also causes a break in humanity's relationship with the rest of creation. That rebellion also influences the relationship of creation with God as it seeks to place the natural world at the self-serving disposal of humanity. Conversely, a fracture initiated by humanity in its relationship with the rest of creation ruptures its relationship with God. However, "God's redemptive activity is aimed at restoring the wholeness in each of these sides of the triangle."<sup>10</sup>

The following sections will discuss each of the fundamental components of the triangular God-man-nature relationship in greater detail, as well as their interrelationships with one another.

## 4.2 Nature's Intrinsic Value

### 4.2.1 Nature as Creation

The most appropriate place to begin a search for a biblical understanding of nature is in the book of Genesis. In reflecting on Genesis 1:1, Paul Santmire has suggested using the term nature "...as a synonym for a more concrete term rooted in biblical parlance, 'the earth'."<sup>11</sup> "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Gen. 1:1. Joseph Sittler has compared the more general

theological term "creation" with the term "nature." An observation made by both writers, however, is that while the terms "nature" and "creation" have historically been used interchangeably, they are not, in the strict sense, synonymous. This thesis recognizes that both terms are culturally defined, and do not have a pre-given meaning. We may, however, observe some prevalent perceptions of these terms in Western thought. "Nature" has often been perceived as a neutral term. This has generally been the case in its scientific usage particularly throughout the modern period. "Nature" can, however, and often does have a philosophical meaning ascribed to it. One of these is that meaning which is generally associated with the term "creation." This latter term is generally used as a religious and philosophical term whose meaning is dependant on a God-postulation. The theological concept of creation can be further distinguished from the philosophical meaning. Santmire explains:

As part of the world created by God...[the earth] is "creature" (ktisis), not "nature" in the sense of the philosophical concept of nature. That is to say, it exists only by the will of the Creator and the creative Word of almighty God. Its existence is bordered by an absolute beginning and an absolute end like that of the whole world of heaven and earth.<sup>12</sup>

In this thesis, the use and understanding of the term "nature" and related terms such as "ecology," "environment" and "natural world" will be based on this fundamental

theological construct. Unless otherwise noted, to all of these terms, as used in this thesis will be ascribed a theological meaning; that is, they pre-suppose the Christian doctrine of creation.

#### 4.2.2 Nature and Divine Goodness

The first basic lesson in the book of Genesis is that nature (earth) must be understood as creation. This not only tells the reader something about nature but also about God. In the Christian doctrine of creation, God is the source of all that is.<sup>13</sup> God's creative acts are, therefore, not exactly analogous to human creativity, which pre-supposes pre-existent matter which can be manipulated and given new form.

...the Christian idea [of creation], far from merely representing a primitive anthropomorphic projection of human art upon the cosmos, systematically repudiates all direct analogy from human art:<sup>14</sup> God creates with no material presupposed.

Thus, the Hebrew language reserves a special verb "to create" (bara') for God's creative action to distinguish it in its original and absolute sense from what is thought of as human creativity.<sup>15</sup> This biblical image of absolute origination explains all of the physical elements and processes of created nature as coming into being or finite existence through the acts of God, the Creator. On many occasions in both the Old and New Testaments, God is

re-affirmed as the creator/maker. The psalms in particular, delight in re-telling the story of God's initial creative acts in poetic form.

Bless the LORD...  
who coverest thyself with light as with a garment,  
who hast stretched out the heavens like a tent,  
who hast laid the beams of thy chambers on the  
waters,  
who makest the clouds thy chariot,  
who ridest on the wings of the wind,  
who makest the winds thy messengers,  
fire and flame thy ministers.  
Thou didst set the earth on its foundations,  
so that it should never be shaken...  
(Psalm 104:1-5)

God's creative acts most adequately establish a basis for the understanding of his sovereign lordship over all life and all existence.

The earth is the LORD's and all the fulness  
thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein;  
(Psalm 24:1)

For the LORD is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.  
In his hands are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his also.  
The sea is his, for he made it;  
for his hands formed the dry land.  
(Psalm 95:3-5)

Besides biblical references to God's creative authority and ability, the biblical canon portrays God as the bearer and giver of absolute goodness and righteousness. The psalmist gives testimony to the goodness of God to his whole creation in Psalm 104. The words of Jesus re-affirm

God's character as the embodiment of an ultimate and absolute standard of goodness "...there is none good but one, that is, God..."(Matt. 19:17, K.J.V.)

Such an understanding of God has a significant influence on what Nancy Watkins Denig calls the second lesson from Genesis pertaining to the biblical understanding of nature. "Creation is good, for God called it so."<sup>16</sup> Following each act of creation, dry land and vegetation, moon and stars, birds and fish, animals and man, God paused to reflect on and evaluate the fruits of his creative activity. Each of these acts in the first chapter of Genesis is followed by the phrase: "And God saw that it was good." (Gen. 1:12, 18, 21, 25). After all of the created elements and processes had been set in motion by the Creator, he paused once more for evaluative reflection on all that he had done. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."(Gen. 1:31) The goodness of God and of the created world, as outlined in the Bible, can be seen more clearly when it is placed against the background of the prevailing mythological world view of the Ancient Near East.

The demythologized world which the Priestly Account presupposes and seeks to display is a deliberate countering

of the surrounding myths of the world at that time. In the mythological world view of the Ancient Near East, humanity was thought to live in constant fear of the supernatural forces and destinies embedded in divine nature (earth and stars). From a general knowledge of the Babylonian myth known as Enuma elish<sup>17</sup> one immediately sees that the relationship of earthly creatures (including humans) to the rest of the natural forces was not one of organic or biological interdependence in the sense that the present chapter has suggested as being the case with the biblical creation account (see Fig. 3). Instead, the Enuma elish portrayed the earth and heavens as being made up of the split corpse of Tiamat (the primordial mother and bearer of the powers of chaos) who was conceived of as a dragon or fishlike monster. Tiamat and her allied rebel gods and fiendish monsters had been conquered in a divine warring conflict by Marduk, "most potent and wisest of gods,"<sup>18</sup> who then

...paused to view her dead body,  
That he might divide the monster and do artful  
works.

He split her like a shellfish into two parts:  
Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky,  
Pulled down the bar and posted guards.  
He bade them to allow not her waters to escape.<sup>19</sup>

Mankind was believed to be created from a mixture of clay and the blood of the slain god Kingu (the second husband of Tiamat and commander of the rebel forces).

Blood I [Marduk] will mass and cause bones to be.  
I will establish a savage, "man" shall be his  
name.

Verily, savage-man I will create.

He shall be charged with the service of the gods  
That they might be at ease!<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in the Babylonian creation myth (enuma elish) the world and its constituents were created out of the bodies of evil gods, inherently predisposing them to evil. Humanity was made to be the slave of the gods to do their menial work. The whole cosmos and the forces which acted therein, were believed to be controlled by warring factions of supernatural divine beings. While the myth expressed the understanding of humans in relation to the recurrent cycles of nature, it described a world in which humanity felt basically anxious and insecure. The annual devastation of the flooding Tigris and Euphrates rivers was a vivid reminder to the people of Mesopotamia that the world was ever on the verge of chaos.<sup>21</sup> Thorkild Jacobson writes:

Every spring, the waters flood the Mesopotamian plain and the world reverts to a -- or rather to 'the' -- primeval watery chaos until the winds fight the waters, dry them up and bring back the dry land.<sup>22</sup>

In that situation, the people of Mesopotamia believed, without speculative or intellectual detachment, that they were caught in an interplay of the divine figures which controlled and manipulated the powerful forces of nature with little or no concern for humans.

In contrast to this prevalent world view of the Ancient Near East, the biblical creation narratives present a demythologized world, in which there is only one divine being: God. Unlike the Babylonian myth, where all is said to have been created in warring conflict out of evil (i.e. the bodies of evil gods), God is described as having created, without any resistance, a creation which met his full satisfaction and on which he could reflect and exclaim, "It was very good." (Gen. 1:31) God's delight in his creation corresponds to its congruity which is the perfect fulfillment of its determination by his rule.<sup>23</sup> This is further emphasized when the biblical writers, on several occasions, call on nature to praise God.

Praise the LORD!...  
Praise him, sun and moon,  
praise him all you shining stars!  
Praise him all you highest heavens,...  
Let them praise the name of the LORD!  
For he commanded and they were created.  
And he established them for ever and ever;  
he fixed their bounds which cannot be passed.  
Praise the LORD from the earth,  
you see monsters and all deeps,  
fire hail, snow and frost,  
stormy wind fulfilling his command!  
Mountains and hills,  
fruit trees and all cedars!  
Beasts and all cattle,  
creeping things and flying birds!  
(Psalms 148:1a,3-4a,5-10)

God's creative intention for nature not only stands in contrast to the prevalent world view of the Ancient Near East, but also to the Gnostic belief in the incompatibility



of the spiritual and material realms which was discussed in the previous chapter. Unlike Gnosticism, biblical revelation clearly indicates that nature is not inherently evil and that God and nature are not antagonistic to each other.<sup>24</sup> On the contrary, the whole priestly creation account (Gen. 1-2:4) clearly states God's divine satisfaction with all that he has created. The goodness which God sees in his creation would suggest that in the biblical perspective, "nature is, in fact, permeated with the sacred and imprinted by God the creator and sustainer."<sup>25</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson emphasizes this when he observes that there is no Hebrew word which is equivalent to our "modern" concept of nature. "The only way to render this idea [nature] in Hebrew would be to say simply 'God'."<sup>26</sup> Such a statement could easily be misunderstood to mean that nature and God are one and the same and that nature ought to be worshipped in the same sense. Such a conclusion could not, however, be supported biblically. Instead, the statement should be read in the context of Sittler's observation that "...nature comes from God and is capable of bearing the glory of God."<sup>27</sup> Thus nature, understood as creation, inherently bears something of his divine image. Rosemary Ruether has gone so far as to call creation "...the gracious icon of God's face."<sup>28</sup> Nancy Watkins Denig points out, however, that the reflective

imagery is not meant to suggest that nature's reflection of God is entirely complete.<sup>29</sup> The Apostle Paul wrote to this effect in his first letter to the Corinthians. "...now we see in a mirror dimly, but then ['when the perfect comes'] face to face." (1 Cor. 13:12) This will be discussed further in subsequent sections. The main point to be demonstrated here, however, is that nature does have the inherent capacity to reflect the divine goodness of its creator. It follows, therefore, that "Our modern view of nature as by definition not having anything to do with the divine is in complete hiatus with the Old Testament view."<sup>30</sup>

This Old Testament understanding is carried through in the New Testament as well. The incarnation of Christ is the strongest response against the Gnostic claim that the "flesh" is evil.<sup>31</sup> It serves as further evidence of the goodness of the material.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the father. (John 1:1-4,14)

As William Temple asserts, "the world, which is the self-expressive utterance of the Divine Word, becomes itself a true revelation, in which what comes is not truth concerning God, but God himself."<sup>32</sup> Since Christ came in the flesh,

the body and the whole material world should not be viewed as inherently evil, as it was by the Gnostics.

One further testimony, beyond Christ's incarnation, is the sacrament of communion. Denig observes that, during this sacrament, "fruits of the earth and of man's labor, ordinary bread and wine, are reconsecrated as manifestations of Christ, God-in-the-world."<sup>33</sup>

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins..." (Matt. 26:26-28)

Hence, the bread and the wine (material substances) of the Lord's Supper become the media through which the spiritual blessings of God are communicated to humankind.

Up to this point, the discussion has attempted to demonstrate that nature, understood as creation, intrinsically bears a divinely intended goodness. The basis for this interpretation has been illustrated in: God's divine satisfaction with his creation as it is expressed in the priestly document, the poetic images of nature praising God (which suggests an image of God joyfully receiving that praise and delighting in the goodness of his creation), the incarnation of Christ into the material world, and finally,

the use of the fruits of the earth (bread and wine) to represent God's blessing symbolically. The above description of nature's inherent value might lead one to conclude that, in its perfect correspondence to his creative rule, God might rejoice in nature itself as an ultimate end. "Nature in itself offers every assistance - one thinks here of its variety, its immensity, its infinite complexity - to make the rejoicing of God complete, both now and in the time of new creation."<sup>34</sup> This would re-affirm the existence of non-human creation as a distinct theological fundamentum as was suggested earlier. However, the inherent goodness or congruity of nature, as described in the bible, encompasses not only its direct relationship with its creator, but also its interactive linkage with humankind. As part of the created order, humanity is dependent on the rest of creation, and the Bible reminds us that God who sustains his people with the fruits of the earth and calls upon them to rejoice in them and give thanks.

'... he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O LORD, hast given me.' And you shall set it down before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God; and you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you...(Deut. 26:9-11a)

Therefore, a second, equally important, aspect of nature's inherent goodness and congruity with God's creative rule is its further participation in satisfying humanity's basic

physical and emotional needs as well as forming the interactive context with and within which humanity experiences God.

#### 4.3 God's Transcendence of and Active Participation Within the Natural World

Understanding the concept of God's transcendence of and active participation within the world is an important factor in understanding the character of God and his creation. As well, it further helps to establish a clearer understanding of the relationship between his transcendence and participation. The term "transcendence" is often used quite freely and without clear definition. Transcendence and transcendent theology have often been identified as one of the major obstacles standing in the way of an ecologically sensitive theology. This section will seek to show that the Christian concept of a "transcendent God" need not imply a God who is separate or external in the sense of being irrelevant to, unconcerned with or inactive in the natural world. On the contrary, the discussion will attempt to demonstrate conceptually that the nature and fullness of God's active participation in the world is dependent on his transcendence.

#### 4.3.1 The Transcendence of God

The connotations which generally accompany the word transcendence are that God is "above," "beyond," and "before" the natural world and, therefore, not "part of" it. "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens..."(Psalm 104:19) All of the above descriptions of transcendence convey spatial or temporal meanings. An over-simplified understanding of these meanings might suggest that God is more "up there" than his creatures and merely "older." Such a limited understanding of transcendence would imply that an astronaut travelling in space would be more certain to find God in "heaven" than a faithful earthbound follower of God. While the temporal and spatial aspects have some bearing, the idea of divine transcendence must be understood as meaning more than merely "above" and "beyond" in space or "before" in time.

Langdon Gilkey has identified three major concepts involved in the idea of divine transcendence.<sup>35</sup> The first two have to do with "ontology" or the problem of existence, being, and the nature of reality. These will be of particular concern to the present discussion. The third aspect has to do with "epistemology," or the problem of the knowledge of God.

The first aspect of divine transcendence involves a difference in the modes of existence between God and creation. God "transcends" other beings in the manner in which he exists. Gilkey explains that "While other things 'have' existence, God 'is' existence, for His essence involves His existence."<sup>36</sup> As was mentioned in the previous section, the Bible stands in contrast with the prevalent Ancient Near Eastern world view in its assertion that God is the source of all that is. Because the existence of all creation is dependent on God, its relation to its existence or being is distinctly different than that which God has to his existence. The first verse in the book of Genesis presupposes that God existed "in the beginning." He is then said to have created the heavens and the earth and all that is within them and called them into an inter-dependent relationship.<sup>37</sup> The Bible, therefore assumes that

Creatures are dependent; they receive their existence and being from things beyond themselves: from their parents [Gen. 4:1a], from environment [Gen. 2:16, Matt. 6:11], from a multitude of finite causes outside them, and ultimately from God [Gen. 1:1-31], who gives being and power to all these causes. And only so long as these outside causes and influences continue to support a finite thing, will it maintain its existence.<sup>38</sup>

The relation of creation to its existence might be thought of as external in the sense that its existence depends on something besides itself. From the perspective of ecological science, an organism depends on the eco-system

for its continued existence. If the system is interrupted and the supply of nutrients, energy, etc. is cut off, the organism ceases to exist. "Finite things are contingent; they have existence at this moment in dependence upon other things, but they may lose it in a second, and must lose it in the end."<sup>39</sup> In the theological sense the organism and the eco-system, understood as creation, are also ultimately dependent on the creator for their existence. Nowhere in the Bible do we find any evidence that there is any such reality as a self-sufficient organism. Every aspect of creation is dependent on, conditioned by and in fact exists because of factors beyond itself.

In contrast, the Bible characterizes God's existence as one of independence from the created realm. This does not imply that he does not interact with his creation. Rather, it suggests that his existence is not dependent on his creation. Since Genesis 1:1 presupposes that God existed before he created the heavens and the earth, he is understood as the source of all existence and not its recipient. Because he existed before anything else, God's existence must be derived from himself alone. It follows, therefore, that his coming into being and continued existence are not dependent on anything beyond himself, and in this sense he transcends the created world.



He is self-sufficient in His being, a se (self-derived) as theologians have said, rather than ab alio (derived from elsewhere), as are creatures. Or, as the scholastic theologians put it: since existence comes from Him, and therefore from His nature, His "essence involves existence, He "is" existence - whereas creatures, who are dependent<sup>40</sup> upon other things, only "have" existence.

All of creation can be considered as existing "contingently." Every "creature" depends on things beyond its control. As creator, however, God exists "essentially" since his existence comes from himself and from nothing beyond himself.

The comparison between the biblical creation account and the Babylonian creation myth Enuma elish, made earlier in the discussion, also helps to clarify God's active freedom and independence from anything beyond himself. The divine beings of the Babylonian myth are said to have made the world in a warring conflict among rivaling gods. While they all exercised a degree of power and authority, none of them was considered to be independent of the actions of the other. None of them, in that sense, possessed absolute sovereignty. Biblical teaching, on the other hand, characterizes God as the absolute sovereign Lord of heaven and earth and everything within them. The repetition of the phrases "and God said...and it was so" in the first chapter of Genesis emphasizes God's creative authority and independence of external constraints. Other Old and New

Testament passages confirm the power and authority of God's command by which he also transcends his creation.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.  
(Psalm 33:6)

By faith we understand that the world was created  
by the word of God, so that what is seen was made  
out of things which do not appear.  
(Hebrews 11:3)

Another ontological aspect of the transcendence of God is that he is in some sense eternal. "The eternal God is your dwelling place." (Deut. 33:27). "He is always and forever first (and last). He is like the horizon surrounding us on all sides. We cannot, by definition, ever look beyond him to a time when he was not."<sup>41</sup> This temporal difference in his being is part of what identifies God as God and forms a basis on which he challenges his people to test this.

"I am the first and I am the last;  
besides me there is no god.  
Who is like me let him proclaim it..."  
(Isaiah 44:15)

We have discussed that the biblical idea of God, as the creator and ruler of all, implies that God is not dependent on or subject to anything beyond himself. As such, he is understood to transcend temporal passage in the sense that temporality is not a limiting factor to his existence or activity. While not being dependent on or subject to it, God does relate to temporality in his participation

(revelation) in history. Through this participation he relates with the whole of creation (human and non-human). In not being limited by time's passage, God is able to interact with his creation throughout history as he wills. Emil Brunner explains the concept of God's eternity as follows:

His eternity...is something quite different from timelessness: it is a sovereign rule over Time and the temporal sphere, the freedom of Him who creates and gives us Time. As for the Creator, the limitations and laws of the created world do not limit Him, because it is He who posits them and creates them, so also for Him the barriers of the temporal - the separation into past, present and future - do not exist. God includes and comprehends Time within His Presence; He does not eliminate it, but He fulfills it....He is present in the Temporal as a whole as He wills.<sup>42</sup>

This interpretation of God's eternity implies that, although God is related to time, as he participates and reveals himself in history, he is not pushed, hurried, changed, or removed by time's motion.<sup>43</sup> The words of the psalmist provide an example of the biblical basis for this understanding of God's eternity and contrast it with the finite temporal existence of his creation.

As for man, his days are like grass;  
he flourishes like a flower of the field;  
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone...  
But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting  
to everlasting....  
(Psalm 103:15-17)

So far the discussion has dealt with the idea of God's transcendent "being" and eternal existence; his infinity as compared to his finite creation. This brings to our attention some of the spatial symbols mentioned earlier ("above," "beyond," "outside," etc.) which pertain to God's transcendence. While they are spatial metaphors which imply physical distance, their meaning lies more in describing the ontological or essential differences between God and creation. That is to say that God is "outside" of or "beyond " the world of creation primarily in the sense that the two are distinctly different (in the nature of their essence and being). "God is 'outside' the world in the sense that at no level is the world God or God the world."<sup>44</sup>

The two stand to each other in a relationship analogous to that of a craftsman to his work.

There are several biblical bases for the distinction between God and his creation. Firstly, no part of creation can be said to share any aspect of God's divinity in the sense that it is directly a part of God.<sup>45</sup> Divinity belongs to God and only God. This is clear in the contrast between the Priestly creation account and the Babylonian creation story Enuma elish, which was discussed earlier. Whereas the Babylonians identified the world of nature with the chaos gods, the biblical assertion is that God alone is divine; the created world being a manifestation of his divine will.

Thus, while the Bible maintains that creation is not divine, this does not imply that creation is not good or that it can not meet God's divine satisfaction and offer him glory. The previous section has already attempted to demonstrate that the natural world (in its own way) reflects something of the image or character of its loving creator and sustainer. What is meant, here, is simply that, while the whole of creation is "very good" (Gen. 1:31), it is neither divine nor worthy of worship.

Another distinction between God and creation, in the biblical tradition, which has been the focus of the present section, is the difference in their essence and being. "For in creating, God gives his creatures distinct, concrete existence in space and time - He gives them 'being.'"<sup>46</sup> In the biblical view, God is not dependent on or restricted by anything beyond himself. His relations with time and space and his interaction with creation, in general, are of his own free will in accordance with his divine character (his love, grace, righteousness and creativity).

The manner in which God transcends creation has been described here in terms of his distinctiveness; his divinity and existence as the eternal and self-sufficient source of the whole creation. It is hoped that through this

discussion, the reader will have an understanding of the biblical concept of transcendence which considers the nature and fulness of God's active participation in the world as being dependent on his transcendence.

#### 4.3.2 God's Active Participation in the Natural World

We have seen, in the previous section, that biblical teaching strongly affirms God's transcendence. This section will attempt to demonstrate that the Bible asserts God's active presence, in power and wisdom, within the world as firmly as it affirms his transcendence over the world.

In describing the nature of God, Henlee Barnette points out that:

The God of biblical revelation is not a static being, not an impersonal, but personal reality. He is not the god of the Deists, who supposedly made the universe like a clock, wound it up, and then withdrew to let it be governed mechanically by law. Nor is he the god of the pantheist who is identified with or equated with the world. Nor is God the impersonal deity of the philosophers. No, the God of divine revelation is the living personal God who loves and cares for his creation, involving himself in it...suffering with his suffering creatures, and achieving his eternal purpose of redemption in history.<sup>47</sup>

The ontological understanding of nature (creation), presented earlier, described the creature as receiving and maintaining its existence from beyond itself rather than in its own nature. The ecological inter-dependence between

creatures and their environment, and the dependence of both on God, who actively participates and rejoices as the creator and sustainer, is expressed in Psalm 104.

Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle,  
and plants for man to cultivate,  
that he may bring forth food from the earth...  
The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly,  
the cedars of Lebanon which he planted.  
In them the birds build their nests;  
the stork has her home in the fir trees.  
Thy mountains are for the wild goats;  
the rocks are a refuge for the badgers.  
Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons;  
the sun knows its time for setting.  
Thou makest darkness, and it is night,  
when all the beasts of the forest creep forth.  
The young lions roar for their prey,  
seeking their food from God.  
When the sun rises, they get them away  
and lie down in their dens.  
(Psalm 104:14,16-22)

The creatures and the environments which biologically supports them

...are, then, only so long as God's creative act continues to give them being, for they do not generate their own power to be from themselves, but as the moments of existence pass, they receive it continually from beyond themselves.<sup>48</sup>

O LORD, how manifold are thy works!  
These all look to thee,  
to give them their food in due season.  
When thou givest to them, they gather it up;  
when thou openest thy hand, they are filled with  
good things.  
When thou hidest thy face, they are dismayed;  
when thou takest away their breath, they die  
and return to their dust.  
When thou sendest forth thy spirit [breath],  
they are created;  
and thou renewest the face of the ground.  
May the glory of the LORD endure forever,  
may the LORD rejoice in his works...  
(Psalm 104:24,27-3)

Henlee Barnette observes that the New Testament shares in the expression of God as the active and loving sustainer of his creation.

He feeds the birds (Matt.6:26) and allows no sparrow to fall to the ground without noticing (Matt 10:29-30); Luke 12:6). He<sup>49</sup> clothes the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:30)...

Thus, both Testaments support a view in which creation appears to be an ongoing activity which manifests itself through God's active presence within his creation. This view is shared by Paul Tillich. "The doctrine of creation is not the story of an event which took place 'once upon a time'. It is the basic description of the relation between God and the world."<sup>50</sup> Tillich uses the term "sustaining creativity" for the continuing relation of God with the world and for the world's continuing dependence upon him.<sup>51</sup> While God infinitely transcends his creation as the free, self-sufficient (non-restricted) being, from which all derives its existence,<sup>52</sup> it is the complete lack of natural constraints (dependence) characterizing his existence, which affords him absolute freedom of choice and opportunity. Although he is not forced to interact with creation through a dependence on it, the transcendent God chooses not only to create initially but also to participate through sustaining creativity in a spirit of redeeming love and grace. It is his freedom that has called him into relationship with his creation. Barth explains:



The statement: "God is the creator of the world" has in the main a double content: it speaks of the freedom of God (one could say also: of His holiness) over against the world, and of His relationship (one could also say: of His love) to the world.<sup>55</sup>

God's love for and willingness to interact with the whole of his creation is evident in the covenant (charter defining a relationship) into which he enters with it.

"Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark." (Gen. 9:9-10)

We notice three important points in this passage: 1. it is God who initiates the covenant; 2. it is between God and all living creatures, not only humans; and 3. the earth is included as well. Thus, all creation is included. The covenant shows God's commitment to life and order in the universe without asking anything in return.

His transcendence enables God to relate to and interact with his creatures to an extent and fullness which only he as Creator and God can. Rather than forcing him to be physically set apart from his creation, God's transcendence enables him to encompass it fully. One might visualize this through personification as God's ability to embrace the whole universe in his arms with no restrictions.

The Bible teaches that God's transcendence enables him to use nature as a medium by which he reveals himself. We observe this in the manner in which the biblical writers characterize God as manifesting himself in thunder, lightning, fire and volcanic eruption<sup>54</sup> (Psalm 18:7-15; 29; Ex. 19:16 ff.). These forces of nature ought not to be identified with God, as the pantheists do, rather they are to be thought of as the media through which God can choose to reveal himself. Thus, just as the previous section described the eternal God revealing himself through the medium of history, so too, the transcendent God can be said to reveal himself freely in nature as he chooses.

The creator God is most fully revealed in his Son, the cosmic Christ, through and for whom all things were made (Col. 1:15f.) and by whose word of power the universe is upheld (Heb. 1:1-4).<sup>55</sup> "For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell..." That God should have a son who is flesh (truly human) while at the same time bearing the fulness of God's nature would be the ultimate heresy to a religion which viewed God's transcendence as that which separates God from the natural world. The Koran of the Islamic faith bears witness to this.

Those who say, "The Lord of mercy has begotten a son," preach a monstrous falsehood, at which the very heavens might crack, the earth break asunder and the mountains crumble to dust. That they

should ascribe a son to the Merciful when it does not become him to beget one!<sup>56</sup>

It follows, therefore, that Christianity has made a commitment to the belief in a God who is, on the one hand transcendent, yet at the same time actively participating in the world even so far as to take on the form of one of its creatures. While it might seem more fitting that the Messiah (Christ) be born in a royal palace, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born in a stable, most likely surrounded by sheep and cattle. This apparent paradox seems to emphasize the "earthiness" of the incarnation further and perhaps suggests the coming of the savior not only to redeem his people, but to restore the whole of creation.<sup>57</sup>

The biblical account of Jesus' adult life further testifies to God's participation in and concern for the physical world. Jesus is portrayed as one who cared deeply for physical needs. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and freed the oppressed. His concern for the poor and his call for social justice are based on a recognition of the need for equitable distribution of the earth's produce. He was, therefore, not only interested in spiritual blessings but also acknowledged God's gifts of physical sustenance. As well, he acknowledged God's care and provision for non-human creation (Matt. 6:26; 10:29-30; Luke 12:6).

In the light of the biblical evidence, here cited, it is clear that God, who is understood as being wholly other than his creation, thereby transcending it, has willed to enter into a covenantal relationship with it. He has, thereby, been characterized as having committed himself to participate actively in its sustenance, its suffering and its renewal, thus revealing his nature as creator, sustainer and redeemer.

#### 4.4 Human Co-existence and Unity with the Natural World

So far, the discussion has focused primarily on the biblical relationship between God and creation (the natural world). We shall now turn our attention to the biblical relationship between humanity and the rest of the created world. The Bible appears to provide a twofold understanding of humanity's relationship with the rest of creation. On the one hand, humanity is considered as unique or different from the rest of creation. On the other hand, humanity is portrayed as having essential similarities and interdependence with non-human creation. Traditional theology (particularly since the 16th century) has emphasized the first aspect, namely the uniqueness of mankind. Less emphasis has been placed on the second aspect. There is a temptation for contemporary biblical reflection, influenced by contemporary thinking, to swing

the other way and overstress the second aspect, namely the interdependence and similarity with non-human creation, while de-emphasizing the first. The present discussion intends to demonstrate that a balance between both aspects, considered in the light of the triangular God-man-nature relationship, presented earlier, can develop into a harmonious biblical understanding of humanity's co-existence within the natural world. A significant portion of the discussion will be based on the first chapters in the book of Genesis. This is not intended to suggest that they comprise the heart of the Bible's teaching on co-existence between human and non-human creation (reference will be made to other books in both Testaments). The reason for highlighting the early chapters in Genesis is twofold. Firstly, it is these chapters which have been taken up almost exclusively by traditional Christian theology of creation, and, secondly, it is the interpretation of these chapters which forms the basis for the argumentation of a number of critics against biblical teaching on the relation of humanity to the natural world. This latter point is clearly evident in the words of Ian McHarg.

The affirmation of Jehovah, the God in whose image man was made, was also a declaration of war on nature...the Biblical creation story of the first chapter of Genesis, the source of the most generally accepted description of man's role and powers, not only fails to correspond to reality as we observe it, but in its insistence upon dominion and subjugation of nature, encourages the most

exploitative and destructive instincts in man rather than those that are deferential and creative. Indeed, if one seeks license for those who would increase radioactivity, create canals and harbors with atomic bombs, employ poisons without constraint, or give consent to the bulldozer mentality, there could be no better injunction than this text.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.4.1 Human and Non-human Creation

The biblical story of beginnings (creation) is presented in two separate accounts, the Priestly Account (Gen. 1:1-2:4a) and the Yahwist Account (Gen. 2:4b-3:24 and beyond). Although they are distinctly different in character, they have been placed together to form a continuous story. In the view of Waldemar Janzen, these two accounts are in harmony with one another as to their theology (their teachings concerning the world and humankind in relation to God) yet they express that theology in different ways.<sup>59</sup>

The first account (Gen. 1:1-2:4a) portrays the authority and goodness of the sovereign God. Every act of creation bears testimony to his sovereign rule. By his command, God systematically and progressively forged life-sustaining order out of a primordial state of chaos. While the sequence of the original events of creation, as described in the Priestly Account, seems puzzling, the first and last three days of creation might be understood as

showing a certain correspondence between environment and environmental dependants. Fig. 6 illustrates these environmental interrelationships as a progressive layering. In this diagram, humanity along with terrestrial animals is found at the highest level of environmental dependence.

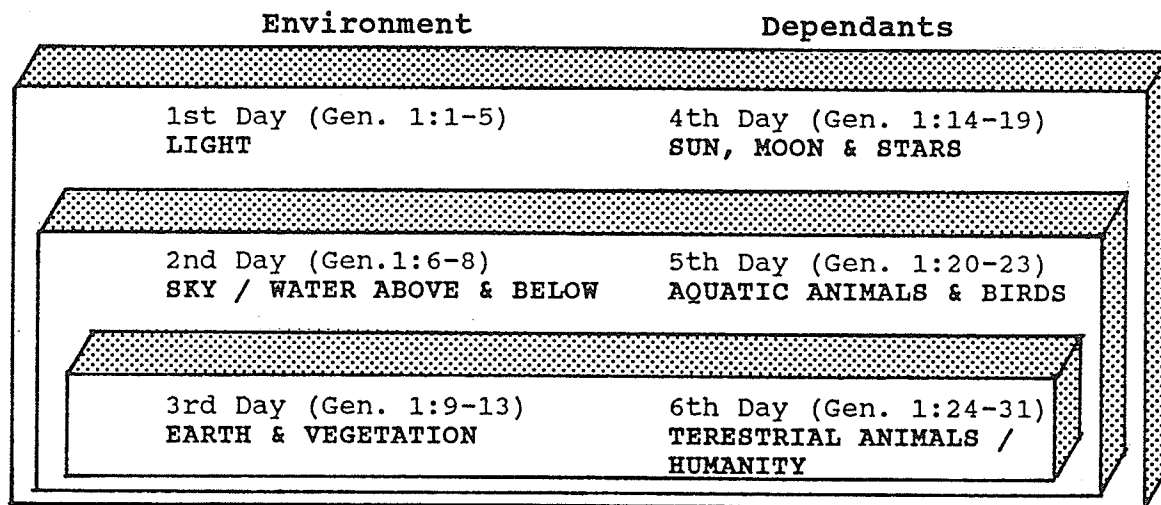


Fig. 6

Some familiarity with the views of Ancient Near Eastern mythology is helpful at this point. When placed against the background of this ancient mythology, the sequence of creation in this account takes on another level of meaning. In the mythology of the Ancient Near East, the heavenly bodies were often regarded as gods. The sequence of the Priestly Account shows them to be created after light. Thus, not only are they to be understood as "non-gods", created by and subject to God, they are, in fact, dependent on another

of God's creation (light). In the same way, the great creatures of the sea were considered to be symbols of (divine) chaos in the Ancient Near East. Their interdependent relation to the rest of creation and their creaturely dependence on the creator suggest that "whatever powers of chaos there may be, they are not to be feared as rivals of God, but are subject to him."<sup>60</sup>

Like the heavenly bodies, the great creatures of the deep and all other aspects of creation, the Priestly sequence, modelled in Fig. 6, characterizes humanity as also being subject to a radical interdependence with the rest of creation. Verses 29 and 30 reaffirm that humans and animals (both created on the sixth day) are related in their reliance on plant life for food.

And God said, "Behold I give you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." (Gen. 1:29-30)

"Everything that has the breath of life" refers to all animate life, human and non-human.<sup>61</sup> Humanity is of necessity united with that which supports it.

The Yahwist Account gives further support to the interrelationship of human and non-human creation. Genesis



2:7 describes man as being formed of the dust of the ground (Hebrew: 'adamah'). His name Adam ('adam') signifies this. "Adam literally means earthling, a lowly creature sharing with plants and animals his physical substance made up of the elements of the earth."<sup>62</sup> Hans Walter Wolff reminds us that the etymological root 'dm', "to be red", found in both 'adam' (generic human) and 'adamah' (earth), appears for man's reddish brown skin and for the reddish brown of the earth. The relationship between humanity and the earth, determined by God, is a threefold one.

Man is created out of the earth (2:7; cf. 3:19, 23); he has to work the soil (3:23); and he returns to the earth at his death (3:19). Moreover both the tilling of the soil and the final return to earth are related to his creation from the earth (cf. 3:19, 23 with 2:7).<sup>63</sup>

Using metaphorical language, Santmire describes humanity as being created to be "at home" in the whole created realm of nature. Just as the body and soul of man form a psychosomatic unity (not merely a soul using a body), so too, the self and the world are essentially united.<sup>64</sup> The Hebrew word nephesh, which the traditional English Bible generally translates as "soul" occurs 755 times in the Old Testament. Contemporary biblical scholars, however, are coming to the conclusion that the translation "soul" only corresponds to the meaning of nephesh in a few of those

passages.<sup>65</sup> Wolff points out a total of seven different uses for the word nephesh. They are as follows:

i) Throat

For he satisfies the thirsty nephesh  
and the hungry nephesh he fills with good things.  
(Ps. 107:9 Wolff)

ii) Neck

Why do you want to lay a noose for my nephesh  
to bring about my death?  
(I Sam. 28:9 Wolff)

iii) Desire

A worker's nephesh works for him;  
his mouth urges him on.  
(Prov. 16:26 Wolff)

iv) Soul

You shall not oppress a stranger;  
You know the nephesh of a stranger,  
for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.  
(Ex. 23:9 Wolff)

v) Life

as a bird rushes into a snare  
without knowing that his nephesh is at stake,  
(Prov. 7:23 Wolff)

vi) Person

[Discretion and wisdom] will be life  
for your nephesh and adornment for your neck.  
(Prov. 8:35 Wolff)

vii) Pronouns

Behold God helps me  
the Lord alone upholds me (my nephesh)  
(Ps. 54:4 Wolff)<sup>66</sup>

Thus, the word nephesh, which forms the basis on which Wolff characterizes humanity as "needy man",<sup>67</sup> clearly illustrates the Old Testament concept of the interdependence between the human being (body/soul/life) and the environment. They are inseparable. The same word which characterizes humankind as living a spiritual existence also emphasizes the existential dependence on the environment in words like throat and neck. The throat and neck, through which humans swallow food and water and breathe air represent, most clearly, the necessary union of mankind with the created realm of nature.

#### 4.4.2 Created in God's Image

We have seen that the Bible portrays humankind as being closely related to and dependent on its fellow creatures. At the same time, the Priestly document reserves a special position for humanity in the world and outlines that position with a concise formula stating that it is created and protected as "God's image" (selem 'elohim; Gen. 1:26 f. 9:6)<sup>68</sup> The words "image" and "likeness" are used side by side, beginning with God's deliberation with himself and coming to a decision: "Let us make man in our image [selem], after our likeness [demut]." (Gen. 1:26) The concept of humankind being created in the image of God has led to almost innumerable attempts at interpretation. Unfortunately, these words have also led to rather irresponsible misinterpretation in which humankind is

considered to be divine or at least semi-divine. The implications of such an interpretation are enthusiastically documented by those who reject Judeo-Christian tradition as being a hinderance to contemporary environmental ethics. Although the idea of humans bearing the image and likeness of God has become an ever-repeated, often boastful self-characterization for many Christians, we must recall the interpretation presented earlier in the discussion which reminds us that the human being is, first of all, 'adam (earthling), a lowly creature like the rest. Humanity is to be rightfully understood as one of God's works, not as part of him. The Bible's infrequent characterization of humanity as the image and likeness of God (in addition to Gen. 1:26f., see Gen. 5:3; 9:6) further suggests that it does not warrant undue emphasis.

Claus Westermann<sup>69</sup> has surveyed various trends of interpretation regarding human creation in the image and likeness (selem and demut) of God. Several of these will be mentioned here as they provide insight which is helpful to the present discussion. The following is a brief sketch of the positions which he outlines, and the key personalities with which they are associated: One tendency in church history has been to distinguish between the natural and supernatural dimension of the image of God in humanity.

Another, more pervasive, interpretation of man's creation in God's image has been its association with the superiority of the human mental capacity (reason, conscious personality, will and freedom of decision) and the spiritual superiority (in particular the immortal soul). Another recent view refers the image to humanity's external appearance.

A common weakness which is evident in all three of these approaches is their reduction of the human being into component parts, asking which component makes up the divine image. Th. C. Vriezen expresses this critique in stressing that such a fragmentation is "unbiblical," and that the image can only refer to our total being.<sup>70</sup> The problem of how a human in his total being, functions as God's image remains. Karl Barth's term (Gottes Gegenüber)<sup>71</sup> implies a perception which sees this as being achieved in a kind of "I-Thou" partnership or Divine-human encounter.

Studies in the Ancient Near Eastern meaning of image have led to a fifth approach to the interpretive problem which was developed by Gerhard von Rad, E. Jacob and others along the same lines as observations made by J. Hehn (1915) who observed that, in Babylonia, the images could represent the god. The same was true in Egypt. By analogy, he suggested that humanity, as the image of God, should be seen as God's representative on earth.<sup>72</sup> This concept was

developed further when H. Wildberger<sup>73</sup> and W. H. Schmidt<sup>74</sup> associated the function of humanity's image with the common Ancient Near Eastern understanding of the king as the image of the god, being the god's representative on earth. From this perspective, Genesis 1:26 to 30 would assign to humanity a royal, representative role on earth. This would find support in the commission to "rule" and to "subdue" in verse 28 as well as in the vice-regal position accorded humanity in the related Psalm 8. This last proposal also falls under the criticism of scholars including Westermann.

In order to evaluate interpretive positions such as these and come to a conclusion, Janzen urges his readers to turn back to the biblical text with special emphasis on the crucial words image (selem) and likeness (demut). In studying the usage of these key words elsewhere in the Old Testament, Janzen observes that they may refer to the resemblance of father and son (Gen. 5:3), a picture scene on a wall (Ezek. 23:14), a shadow (Ps. 39:7), a dream (Ps. 73:30), a sculpture or model (2 Kings 16:10). They always refer to items that share qualities, yet are not identical. For example, a dream is like life, but isn't life; a son resembles the father but isn't the father. But most often image refers to the idols, figures that the heathen made to

represent their gods (Amos 5:26; Num. 33:52; 2 Kings 11:18; Ezek. 7:20; 16:7).<sup>75</sup>

The general Old Testament understanding of image and likeness expressing similarity though not identity can be used to illuminate their use in the context of Genesis 1:26 f. where they describe the object of God's new and deliberate act of creation, humanity. Here, the words express the great affinity of the creator and this particular one of his creatures.<sup>76</sup> Here, Janzen is in partial agreement with the views of Barth and Westermann in that he sees humankind as being, in a sense, characterized as God's partner, (Gottes Gegenuber). He cautions, however, against coming to a misunderstanding in which the partnership

...is visualized in existential fashion as an I-Thou relationship, where face turns toward face and eye meets eye. Contrary to expectation, God does not embrace the man here in jubilation over the fitting partner who has been found, as Adam does towards Eve (2:23). Nor does Adam fall down in worshipful recognition of the Wholly Other who is nevertheless the Thou turned toward him. Instead the words that follow are words that equip human beings for a task and dispatch them to it (v. 28).

This thesis shares Janzen's interpretive concept of humanity created in the image or likeness of God. It rejects any theories which see humankind as being above or outside the created works of God and rather insists that

humanity be perceived as integrally embedded among them. Likewise, it rejects any belief which ascribes to humanity the status of divinity or semi-divinity. Instead, the human being, considered holistically, is to be understood as representing God in a significant way, yet not being identified with him as one and the same.

Humanity's affinity to, representation of or partnership with God seems to be closely associated with (and thus ought to be understood in terms of) the special task which it is assigned. Humanity shares, with the animals, the blessing to "Be fruitfull and multiply and fill the waters/earth..." (Gen. 1:22, 28). The blessing for humanity (created in God's image) is unique, however, in that it continues with the words:

"subdue it [the earth], and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the face of the earth." (Gen. 1:28)

This brings us to the next interpretive question, namely, what is implied in the task assigned by God to that creature (humanity) which is most clearly supposed to bear the image of the Creator? What does it mean to "subdue the earth" and "have dominion" over its creatures?



#### 4.4.3 Stewardship as the Basis for Dominion

As with the concept of humanity's creation in the image/likeness of God, the biblical passage dealing with dominion (Gen. 1:26-28) raises several semantic issues. D. Jobling has summarized these issues as follows:

The dominion formulations in Genesis 1:26-28 might in isolation be interpreted as allowing unrestricted human use, even abuse, of the earth and its creatures. But in the immediate context this rule is part of a universal divine hierarchy and harmony, people being charged with peaceful coexistence with and responsibility for nature, Genesis 1...present[s] a dialectical tension between humanity's supreme dignity over and radical oneness with the rest of creation.<sup>78</sup>

It would be superficial and simplistic to attempt to understand the words subdue, dominion or rule in terms of stewardship if one looked only at the meaning of the Hebrew words from which they were translated without placing the passages in the context of the prevalent mythological world view of the Ancient Near East. Wolff explains that subdue (kabash) can otherwise mean the subjugation of a country through war (Num. 32:22, 29), the subjugation of peoples (II Sam. 8:1) and of slaves in particular (Neh. 5:5); and it can also be used for the raping of women (Esth. 7:8). It always implies an action in which someone reduces something to its use through the application of force. Rule (radah) or have dominion over (v. 28) is applied to a royal or kingly rule

in Psalm 72:8; 110:2; Isaiah 14:6; Ezekiel 34:4.<sup>79</sup> This is also evident in Psalm 8:5-6.

...thou...dost crown him with glory  
and honor.  
Thou hast given him dominion over  
the works of thy hands;  
thou hast put all things under his  
feet...  
(Ps. 8:5-6)

Without placing these words (kabash and radah), and the text in which they appear, against the background of the prevailing mythological world view of the Ancient Near East or in the wider context of the Bible, their hermeneutical implications become very easily misinterpreted.

Section 4.2.2 contrasted the relationship of the good God with his good creation, as documented in the Priestly creation narrative with that of the evil, warring chaos gods and the inherently evil world of nature as described in the Babylonian creation story Enuma elish. In the same sense, there is a distinction between the two understandings of the human relationship with the environment and with the supreme (divine) being(s). In the Babylonian myth, humans were created with an inherently evil predisposition as slaves of the gods. While they recognized the recurrent cycles and great powers of nature, humans were understood as being of little regard to (and, therefore, in a sense

detached from) the divine forces and were fully subservient to the natural elements through which these beings acted. They lived in constant fear that their world would be devastated by the unpredictable conflicts of the gods.

Against this background, the biblical creation account described the one and only God creating man out of the ground (Gen. 2:7); he fashioned humanity out of the environment which was to sustain it. Like the rest of the animate creation (the animals, fish and birds), humankind was to eat freely of "every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit" (Gen. 1:30). Humanity was created by a good and righteous God who regarded it highly; so highly that it was considered as a reflection of God's own image (in a sense a representative of God). The story documented the loving God as the creator and therefore the lord of all. All elements and forces of creation were described as being subservient to God and nothing imposed a threat to his sovereign lordship as was the case in the constant divine battles which characterized the Babylonian world view. As a creature of this almighty God, and as a kind of "royal" representative, humankind could live fearlessly among fellow creatures in the world. In an inversion of the Ancient Near Eastern mythological view, humanity, rather than living in fear of and mere subservience to the natural world, was

commissioned in the biblical account to rule over it, exercising dominion as a representative of God (Gen. 1:26-28).

Since, as we have already discussed, the Bible describes humanity as the image or representative of God, it would be consistent that God would expect his representatives to exercise their dominion as he would himself. The basis of humanity's dominion or lordship over the rest of creation must, therefore, be modelled on the nature of God's lordship. The theme of God's lordship is a profound and recurring one in both the Old and New Testaments. While God's lordship is at times described in terms of his "otherness," it is often portrayed in personal, intimate, and sometimes even humble terms. Nancy W. Denig points out three typical metaphors which illustrate these qualities. "The Lord is seen as a husband or bridegroom, as a father, and also as a servant."<sup>80</sup> While she emphasizes that the instances of these metaphors are too wide-spread to be cited inclusively, Denig does give a few examples which are pertinent to the present discussion.

The second chapter of Hosea includes a good example of the metaphorical use of the husband image.

And in that day, says the LORD, you will call me,  
My husband, '...And I will make for you a covenant

on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD. (Hosea 2:16-19)

The book of Hosea was instrumental in setting the pattern for Jewish and Christian thinking regarding the expression of the nature of God and his attitude toward Israel (his people) in terms of marriage.<sup>81</sup> Many other instances of the marriage metaphor can be found in the New Testament. Mark 2:18-27 and John 3:29 refer to Christ as the bridegroom. The kingdom of heaven (God's lordship) is likened to a marriage feast in Matthew chapters 22 & 25. Revelation 29:7 and 22:17 imply Christ to be the bridegroom to his bride, the Church.

The Old Testament uses the father image to describe God on several occasions. In the New Testament, however, it becomes prevalent. It formed the primary understanding of God in Jesus' teaching.<sup>82</sup> Servanthood is yet another important biblical concept to consider in pursuit of a holistic understanding of lordship. We are introduced to this theme in portions of the Old Testament book of Isaiah called the "Servant Songs".

Behold my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my Spirit upon him,

he will bring forth justice to the nations.  
He will not cry or lift his voice,  
a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick he will  
not quench;  
(Isa. 42:1-3)

In studying the Servant Songs, scholars agree that the core of their message expresses that "supreme power or lordship is in love, rather than coercion."<sup>83</sup>

In the New Testament the concept of servanthood is developed further and can be exemplified in the words of the Apostle Paul.

Though he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...(Phil. 2:6-7)

These three metaphors are helpful in coming to an understanding of the concept of dominion which looks beyond the passage in Genesis 1:26-28 and places it in its wider biblical context.

If the Lord God is indeed like a bridegroom/husband or a father or a servant, surely his dominion is founded on love and service. When God gives man dominion, then, it is a commission to love, even serve, nature.<sup>84</sup>

The dominion of humanity (created in God's image), over creation is meant to be a reflection of the nature of God's dominion. "The God of the Bible makes abundantly clear by his own actions that to be lord does not mean to dominate,

plunder, and destroy, but to foster encourage and bless."<sup>85</sup> Thus, the word dominion, taken in its immediate context (Gen. 1:26-28) and in the overall biblical perspective (as well as being understood as an intentional countering of the prevalent creation mythology of the Ancient Near East), takes on a different meaning than the one which critics of the biblical tradition normally ascribe to it.

Another vitally important aspect which should be understood as forming the biblical basis for humanity's dominion over the rest of creation is the concept of stewardship. Stewardship can be defined as the management or care of one's property, finances or other affairs by another to whom they are entrusted. If we seek to apply this definition to the biblical understanding of dominion, we might begin by clarifying what is being cared for and to whom it rightfully belongs. The Priestly creation account stresses the sovereignty of God, the rightfull owner of all that he creates. That everything ultimately belongs to God is further emphasized in other passages as well.

The earth is the LORD'S and the  
fulness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein:  
(Psalm 24:1)

In God's appointment of humankind as his representative to rule over the rest of creation, he endowed it with a

great deal of power and authority (one might understand these in terms of physical and mental capability). With power and authority come responsibility and accountability. Since the earth is the Lord's and humankind has been entrusted to rule over it as God's representative steward, humanity is fully accountable before God for its actions. Robin Attfield points out that this was an important aspect of the Hebrew notion of kingship (dominion).

Kings among the Hebrews were regarded as responsible to God for the realm. The attitude appropriate for a king<sup>86</sup> was that of David at I Chronicles 29:11, 14:

Thine O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom..."But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from thee, and of thy own have we given thee..."  
(I Chronicles 29:11, 14)

Whether or not rulers lived in accordance with this attitude, it is enough that the Hebrew understanding of dominion<sup>87</sup> involved answerability and responsibility alike.

Here, the biblical idea of dominion is clearly described in terms of stewardship where the steward (lord) is entrusted with that which is God's and is not considered as an autonomous master.

While it does not make explicit use of the word stewardship, the second creation account (Gen. 2) makes a



significant contribution to this biblical theme. "The LORD God took the man [whom he had created] and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). In assigning this task to humankind ('adam) in the garden, any notions that creation is at humanity's autonomous disposal are dispelled. Instead, Adam is to "till and keep" the creation. The Hebrew word for till, (abad), means serve, even to the point of "being a slave to."<sup>88</sup> "Keep," which is translated from the Hebrew shamar, can also mean to preserve. Michaelson explains that:

Both terms strongly indicate a form of service on behalf of the creation. Rather than creation being owned by humanity, humanity is given the task of serving and preserving the creation. These words echo and amplify the meaning of being created in God's image from Gen. 1:26.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, while both biblical creation accounts have a distinctive character, suggestive of different authorship, they both convey an understanding of humanity in a relationship of stewardship or husband-like dominion with creation. "...is not the man given husband-like dominion in chapter one like the husband/man, the farmer/gardener we encounter in chapter 2?"<sup>90</sup>

The words of Nancy W. Denig serve as a suitable concluding description of the biblical understanding of humanity's dominion over the natural world in terms of stewardship.

Judeo-Christian man is called to be a faithful steward. He is called to be a steward of all that God has entrusted to him: his own life, other people's lives, the whole created order around him, all aspects of God's varied graces. As a steward of nature, man has been given a sacred trust, sacred because it is God-made and God-given. It is a commission to enjoy and to put all things to good use, for proper use<sup>92</sup> and enjoyment follow from faithful stewardship.

#### 4.4.4 Nature as Gift/Land as Promise and Gift

The theme of "land" is an important one in the Old Testament and serves to illustrate some of the broader principles regarding humanity's relationship to the natural environment under God. A plot of earth, the Garden of Eden, was the first gift, given to humanity by God.<sup>93</sup> As the Bible teaches that God entrusted his earth to humankind so that humankind might be its steward or caretaker, so too, it asserts that the land of promise (Canaan) was God's gift to his people (Israel) as far back as the original promise to Abraham. "To your descendants I will give this land"(Gen. 12:7). The land plays an important role throughout Israel's ancient narrative sources and perhaps comes to its full fruition and prominence in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic History where the basic ecological concerns are most evident.<sup>94</sup>

Abraham, as well as his descendants who were to be the recipients of the promised land, experienced many forms of

homelessness: emigration, subjugation and exploitation in a foreign land, escape and wanderings in the wilderness. All of these stages which eventually led to their taking possession of the land can be seen, in their own way, as contradictions of humanity's original destiny and commission to administer God's good land as stewards.<sup>95</sup> Each stage, however, can be understood as a way station toward the promised "inheritance" and rest in the land of Canaan, for in each, Israel experienced God's grace and leading.<sup>96</sup>

We are reminded of the Old Testament's persistent witness that Israel did not receive the land by right of being the stronger or more righteous, but by the grace of God (Deut. 7:6-8; 9:6-8). The book of Joshua, which deals largely with the issue of how Israel came to possess the land, emphasizes Israel's weakness and God's initiative, thus ascribing all credit and glory to God, who alone is the creator, and who alone gives the land to a weak and undeserving people.

That the land belongs to God was an important aspect in Israel's understanding of her relationship to the land. Within the context of the ordinances concerning the Year of Jubilee in Lev. 25:23, we find the following passage: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine,

for you are strangers and sojourners with me." (Lev. 25:23)  
The idea of God's ultimate ownership of the land is also found in Jeremiah 2:7 and 16:18 where the land is called "nahalat yahweh" (cf. II Sam. 20:19; 21:3; Ps. 24:1). Hans E. von Waldow defines the basic meaning of nahalah as "landed property apportioned to an individual."<sup>97</sup> Thus, the land is understood as rightfully belonging to Yahweh (God).

Alfred von Rohr Sauer observes that when God gave the land to his people, the gift was accompanied by his promise to make ample provision for their wellbeing.

Deuteronomy made much of the fact that in Egypt, the Israelites watered the ground with their feet...but in Canaan, the land of Yahweh's people was able to drink water by the rain of heaven (Deut. 11:10, 11)....Yahweh continued to give the early and late rains, and the staple products remained the same... (Deut. 11:14). When the land for example became weary, Yahweh refreshed it with rain (Ps. 68:9). Even as Yahweh had been favourable to his land in the past (Ps. 85:1), so he would continue to give what was good, and the land would yield its increase for his people (Ps. 85:12). Who, if not Yahweh, could tilt the water skins of the heavens for the benefit of the land (Job 38:37)? Even as the sea fled, the Jordan turned back, Sinai skipped, and the rock became a pool for Israel's benefit (Ps. 114), so the seas and rivers, the mountains and the rocks would continue to respond to the God of Jacob and bring blessing to his people.<sup>98</sup>

The Bible recalls that, while in the land, God expected his people to remember him and acknowledge the land and its blessings and bounty as gifts from God. Von Waldow identifies several practices, in the Old Testament, which are

to be seen against the background of Israel's understanding of God as the owner of the land.

...sacral fallowness every seven years, Ex. 23:10 f; Lev. 25:1 f, the offering of the first fruits, Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Lev. 23:10; the custom of not harvesting the fruits of newly planted trees, Lev. 19:23 ff; the tithe, Ex. 22:28; Num. 18:21 ff; Deut. 14:22; or the practice of not gleaning the fields completely, Lev. 19:9 f; 23:22.

The early chapters of Deuteronomy document successive warnings against the forgetfulness of the people of Israel.

And when the LORD your God brings you into the land which he swore to your fathers...to give to you, the great and goodly cities, which you did not build, and houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out, which you did not hew, and vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, then take heed lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (Deut. 6:10-12)

Once Israel's physical needs were met, there was always the temptation for the people to forget from whom they received their blessing of land and abundance. Such warnings can be said to have been intended to deter human arrogance which saw the blessings of the created world as "things" in the hands of humankind; an attitude which led the steward of God's gifts to become an exploiter. Thus, along with the exhortations to remember him, God also urged his people to take care of the land. "Take care that the land be able to support you, when your days and your children's days are multiplied."<sup>100</sup> The Old Testament teaches that Israel and her land were themselves to be a holy presence representing

God in the wider world (Ex. 19:5-6, Deut. 14:1-2).<sup>101</sup> Thus we find such passages as

Do not defile yourselves by any of these things, for by all these things the nations I am casting out before you defiled themselves; and the land became defiled, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. (Lev. 18:24-25)

This passage appears to recognize a very natural relation between a people and the land they live on. It suggests that if they violate the order of nature (God's law)<sup>102</sup> they defile not only themselves, but also the land on which they live. That is why the land is said to "vomit" out the transgressors. Von Waldow notes that,

The land is spoken of here as a mythological entity with its own power. Israelite thought differs, the mythological power of the land is suppressed, and Yahweh is introduced as the one who casts out the transgressors and punishes them.<sup>103</sup>

The three-way relationship between God, the land and the people of Israel is clearly evident in this interpretation. Von Waldow has used a diagram, similar in nature to Fig. 5 (the triangular God-man-nature relationship), to illustrate this natural relationship between God (Yahweh), his people (Israel) and the land (Canaan).

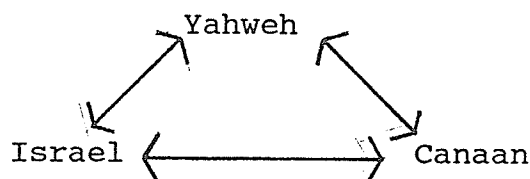


Fig. 7 von Waldow (1974)

The existence of Israel can be described only in a triangular relationship; no point can be left out. Without Yahweh there would be no promise of a great nation, no promise of a land, and no fulfillment. The nation Israel, without claim of being the people of God, would be without any special interest in world history. Canaan, without assignment to the people of God, would be just another area of contention in the power game of world politics.<sup>104</sup>

It was not the interest of this section to provide a comprehensive picture of the Old Testament concept of Israel and her land.<sup>105</sup> What was intended was to demonstrate how some of the important principles of this concept are related to the broader, universal concept of humanity's relationship with the whole created realm of nature as well as with God, the creator, sustainer and redeemer. The similarities between the two triangular models (Figs 5 & 7) support this point. In both, the ideal relationship is an equilibrium or unity between all three sides. A break in one side of the triangle in either model affects the other sides.

#### 4.5 Alienation in the God-man-nature Relationship

Until now, the discussion has focused primarily on the biblical interpretation of the triangular unity between God, humanity and the rest of creation. The present chapter has relied on biblical and scholarly sources to describe this "God-willed" harmony. It has described a loving God who created and sustains a "good" creation which, besides having its own intrinsic value, reveals the glory of its creator and provides a life-sustaining interactive environment in and with which humankind (created in the image of God) can function as a steward and participate in giving praises to God. We shall now turn our attention to the effects of disharmony in this triangular relationship.

If we understand the wholeness of the united triangle to conceptually represent the biblical understanding of God's intended order for creation, then we can perceive the deterioration or reduction of that wholeness in terms of sin. W. G. Michaelson points out that the potential for breaking the links of the triangle lies in the wilfulness of humanity, as distinguished from non-human creation.<sup>106</sup> That is to say that humankind (the free moral being) has the potential to choose between a life of wholesome unity with God and the created realm or a rebellious existence in which it seeks human autonomy from one or the other or both. The



so-called "Fall" in the third and subsequent chapters of Genesis can be seen as representing such a rebellion as a grasping for autonomy from God.

To "be like God" and to disregard God's limitations by eating from the forbidden tree (Gen. 3), to assume the right to kill one's brother (Gen. 4), and generally to seek human autonomy (Gen. 3-11) is the story of this rebellion. Sin, then and now, can be defined as humanity's attempt to act as master rather than steward.<sup>107</sup>

As has already been pointed out earlier, humanity is viewed in the Old Testament as being intimately related with the natural world. As a result, the biblical writers generally affirmed that the well-being of nature before God was dependent on the well-being of man before God. Santmire observes that when humanity sins,

the judgement resting on man for his sin spills over, as it were, onto nature in view of man's solidarity with nature. But sin has its seat in man; it comes into the world through man (or man together with supernatural angelic forces). Nature in itself has not fallen. Nature therefore is not judged by God; it is implicated in judgement because it is the world in which man has his being.<sup>108</sup>

Nature suffers innocently as a result of a sinful, rebellious humanity. This theme of a wounded creation resulting from human sin occurs frequently in the Old Testament and also appears in the New Testament. James Megivern observes that "whatever else may be intended by the narrative, the original sin of man involves an improper use of the earth's fruit."<sup>109</sup> The result:

Cursed is the ground because of you;  
in toil you shall eat of it all the  
days of your life;  
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you...  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.  
(Gen. 3:17-19)

This passage suggests that, while the earth, or the land, is still the scene of humanity's life and activity as well as the source of support, its labour bears the stamp of servitude to a garden whose fertility is always threatened and its own earthiness becomes a sign of its mortality.<sup>110</sup> Another example of the earth being despoiled as a result of humanity's sin is the case of Cain, who pollutes the earth with the blood of his brother Abel, so that: "when you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength [crops NIV]." (Gen. 4:12) Further examples can be given to illustrate the earth's innocent suffering as a result of a broken relationship between humanity and God in its pursuit of autonomy through disobedience. The Prophets Isaiah (24:4-5) and Hosea (4:1-3) declare that humanity's disobedience causes the earth to mourn.

The earth mourns and withers,  
the world languishes and withers;  
the heavens languish together with the earth.  
The earth lies polluted  
under its inhabitants;  
for they have transgressed the laws.  
violated the statutes,  
broken the everlasting covenant.  
(Isaiah 24:4-5)

Jeremiah confirms the connection between the earth's suffering and humanity's sinfulness when he implies that the wrongdoing of the people has upset nature's order and their sins have kept them from her kindly gifts. (Jer. 5:25)<sup>111</sup> Along with the many other Old Testament references which support this theme, the words of the Apostle Paul also affirm its presence in the New Testament. "...for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected....We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail." (Rom. 8:20,22)

The common feature in all of these biblical examples is that violence towards others and/or rebellion against God alienate humanity from creation, causing it to suffer and even destroying its fruitfulness and capacity to sustain life. W. G. Michaelson points out that this equation also has a reciprocal. "Our misuse of creation breeds enmity between us and other people and alienates us from God."<sup>112</sup> Megivern comes to the same conclusion when he considers a reversal of the effects of Cain's murder of his brother. "When man destroys his brother, he pollutes the earth; when he pollutes the earth, he destroys his brother...and himself."<sup>113</sup> The point which is made is that a discordant relationship between humanity and the natural world has adverse social implications within the realm of human relations.

We have already seen that for the people of Israel, the gift of land was to be perceived as being conditional and dependent upon living in the land as if it were God's. Foreign to this belief was the perspective of seeing the land "objectively" as "matter," an attitude which leads to exploitation and the satisfaction of the needs and wants of the individual or nation. The Deuteronomic historian tells us that when Israel forgot that the land was God's and chose to grasp and master it as if it were their own, they lost it. The dissociation of God and the land (earth) is clearly not the message which the Bible wants to convey. On this basis, a distorted attitude toward the land/earth perceiving it objectively as matter to be coveted and possessed for one's own power and aggrandizement is fundamentally "atheistic" (without consideration for God).<sup>114</sup>

W. G. Michaelson observes that the kings often fell subject to the temptation of grasping, accumulating and controlling the land, thus prompting the response of the prophets.<sup>115</sup> He refers to the story of Ahab and Naboth in I Kings 21 to illustrate this connection between a distorted attitude toward the land and social injustice in human relations.

[In the story] two conflicting views toward the land, and creation, are revealed. King Ahab

proposed that he buy Naboth's vineyard. But to Naboth it was unthinkable to sell the land of his inheritance--meaning the land given, through his forefathers, by Yahweh. At Jezebel's prompting, Naboth is killed and Ahab confiscates the vineyard. Elijah comes to Ahab pronouncing the word of the Lord: "Have you killed your man and taken his land as well?" (I Kings 21:19). Then Elijah pronounces the Lord's judgement on Ahab. Murder was only one result of the distorted relationship to creation.<sup>116</sup> The principal sin was coveting the land...

The words of the prophets Isaiah and Micah speak to the same effect.

Woe to those who join house to house,  
who add field to field,  
until there is no more room,  
and you are to dwell alone  
in the midst of the land.  
(Isaiah 5:8)

Woe to those who devise wickedness...  
They covet fields, and seize them;  
and houses, and take them away;  
they oppress a man and his house,  
a man and his inheritance.  
(Micah 2:1-2)

These and similar instances in the Bible suggest that the understanding of all creation as a gift lays the foundation for the prophetic calls for justice. Establishing justice means restoring the right relationships with all creation.<sup>117</sup> Although Christian ethics has traditionally drawn distinctions between concerns for social justice and responsibilities for the care of the earth, these two issues appear to be interwoven and inseparable in the Bible. This is illustrated in Psalm 72, "A prayer for a king," where verses dealing with social justice appear parallel to verses

testifying to hopes and promises of the earth's fruitfulness.

Give the king thy justice, O God,  
and thy righteousness to the royal son!  
May he judge thy people with righteousness,  
and thy poor with justice!  
Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,  
give deliverance to the needy,  
and crush the oppressor!  
May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth!  
In his days may righteousness flourish,  
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!  
May there be abundance of grain in the land;  
on the tops of the mountains may it wave;  
may its fruit be like Lebanon;  
and may men blossom forth from the cities  
like the grass of the field!  
(Psalm 72:1-4, 7-6, 16)

Michaelson cautions that passages such as these ought not to be interpreted

...with modern capitalist ideas of simply increasing the size of the pie in order to meet the needs of the poor. Quite the opposite, these passages call for a new relationship between humanity and creation, and indicate that when justice and Shalom within the creation are established, then the earth's fruitfulness and prosperity -- meaning its ability to supply the needs of all -- will break forth.<sup>118</sup>

The word Shalom, which he uses, is very helpful in order to understand the harmonious triangular relationship. The word expresses the Old Testament understanding of "peace". Psalm 72 and similar passages illustrate two important dimensions of this concept: the liberation of human oppression and the restoring and preserving of the integrity of God's creation. When we see that the depth and breadth of the meaning of Shalom extend beyond social justice and beyond environmental

concern and encompass the whole integrated triangular relationship between God, humanity and the rest of creation, then we are approaching a broader understanding of this underlying biblical notion.

When there is alienation in one aspect, the others suffer as well. The Bible, considered as a whole, does not seem to call for an ethic towards the environment based only on a wholesome relationship with creation. Nor does it appear to call for a social justice based only on love and concern among humans. In the same way, it does not call for an "other-worldly" relationship between God and humanity, one which has no bearing on how we relate to God's world. The Bible stresses the importance and inter-dependence of all three factors; obedience to God, social justice, and the relationship to the earth.

We saw in the previous section how the relationship between God, Israel and the land mirrors the global relationship between God, humanity and the earth. Passages such as Deuteronomy 5:33 and 30:16 illustrate the relationship between obedience to God (in the terms of the covenant and law) and the blessing and prosperity of the land (the earth).

You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that

it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land which you shall possess. (Deut. 5:33; cf. Matt. 5:5)

This relationship is two-sided. On the one hand the blessing and life in the land is contingent upon human respect for God and his will. At the same time, obeying God's will includes taking care of and showing respect for God's gift (the land) which ultimately shows respect for God. As Daniel Epp-Tiessen observes, "the Torah consists of guidelines for the management of the land and life in it."<sup>119</sup>

With regard to social ethics, one feature common to a number of deuteronomic laws is the concern to ensure that everyone has access to the fruits of the earth, even those who do not have a specific allotment of land. This is why there is frequent mention of the land with reference to concern for the poor.<sup>120</sup>

For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land. (Deut. 15:11)

Epp-Tiessen observes that among the special measures necessary to assist the less fortunate members of the community was the leaving of the gleanings in order to provide sustenance for the widow, the fatherless and the sojourner (Deut. 24:19-22) as well as the third year tithe



of the produce of the soil to be distributed among the local Levites and the poor (Deut. 14:28-29).<sup>121</sup>

We can draw several conclusions from the preceding discussion. When humanity is disrespectful of the earth, it shows disrespect for God from whom the earth was given. When an individual or community deprives others of the fruits of the earth, they are not at peace with God nor in proper harmony with the earth. When one is in proper relation with God, one is also compelled and expected to act accordingly in one's relationship to others and with the rest of creation. All of these factors make up the multi-dimensional image of Shalom which ultimately leads us back to the triangular image of Fig. 5: the interactive relation between God, mankind, and the natural world in which he lives.

The discussion has outlined what this thesis has interpreted as the intended harmonious relationship between God, humanity and the natural world, while at the same pointing out that, as a result of sin, this relationship is not as it should be. We have considered how creation suffers from the alienation between God and humanity, as well as the alienation of humankind from the rest of creation. The sins of humanity against God have led his curse to spill into the world in which it dwells. The sins

of humanity against the natural world have laid it to waste. In the shadow of this we are left with a rather gloomy picture and the distressing question: how can this earth be restored?

#### 4.6 Nature's Inclusion in God's Redemptive Activity

In this chapter we have seen that God's intention for an interdependence between human and non-human creation as well as his lordship over both is a broadly based biblical theme.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying "You may eat freely of every tree in the garden..." (Gen. 2:15-16)

That the whole of creation gives glory to God is also restated throughout the Bible, perhaps most poetically in the Psalms.

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth  
rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
let the field exult, and everything in it!  
Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy  
before the LORD... (Psalm 96:11-13a)

That God cares and provides for both human and non-human creation is also restated throughout the Bible.

Thou makest springs gush forth in the valleys;  
they flow between the hills,  
they give drink to every beast of the field;  
the wild asses quench their thirst.  
By them the birds of the air have  
their habitation;  
they sing among the branches.

From thy lofty abode thou waterest the mountains;  
the earth is satisfied with the fruit  
of thy work.  
(Psalm 104:10-13)

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them...consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (Matt. 6:26 & 28b-29)

In the light of the ecological reading of the Bible as visualized in the triangular expression of the relationship between God, humanity and the rest of creation, which the present chapter has advocated, a faith in God as the God of history would make little sense unless it is recognized that God is also Lord of all creation. The Old Testament re-affirms this over and over again in referring to God as Creator. Thus, W. G. Michaelson has pointed out that the God encountered in history is the Creator. The Bible affirms that the whole creation exists not only for humanity, nor as a stage, but as an expression of God's glory. As a result, the whole creation must be understood as the target/object of God's redemptive activity.<sup>122</sup>

The previous section described a fallen world (a world which falls short of God's intention) in which the relationships in the triangle (Fig. 5) are disrupted. While it is hardly necessary to mention the need for salvation with respect to sin which severs the relationship between

God and humanity, less emphasis has traditionally been placed on this need concerning the fractured relationship between humanity and the natural world. The present ecological crisis illustrates with striking clarity that sin has also left this latter relationship in need of healing. In its current state of degradation, non-human creation is left incapable of fulfilling God's intention (as previously defined), thereby upsetting the third relationship in the triangle. We have already seen how the words of the prophet Isaiah (24:4-5) testify to this.

Paul's words to the Romans (8:18-23) suggest his recognition of this threefold need for redemption in describing the future glory. John G. Gibbs suggests that the inclusion of the whole creation in redemption is dependent on its inclusion under Christ's Lordship. "It is the Lordship of Christ over both creation and redemption which determines that there can be no creationless redemption and ultimately no redemptionless creation."<sup>123</sup> As a result, the cosmic Lordship of Christ has become a central issue for proponents of the ecological motif. They have stressed that Christ's eschatological lordship encompasses not only the spiritual but also the material; not only humanity but non-human creation as well. In essence, this includes the entire cosmos, the heavens, the earth, and below the earth. In this sense, Gibbs has

interpreted Philippians 2:9-11 to be understood as referring to the totality of creation. The threefold division of the universe emphasizes that the whole of creation is rightfully subject to and, in a personified sense, offers glory and praise to God.<sup>124</sup>

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2:9-11

This interpretation not only finds support in the context of Romans 8:18-23 but also builds on the Old Testament tradition poetically expressed in Psalm 96:11-13a. That Christ's lordship and omnipotence transcend and encompass all the universe and everything within it also finds support in other well known passages such as 1 Cor. 8:6, Eph. 4:9-12, Phil. 3:21, Col. 1:17-20, etc..

Understanding the biblical idea of Christ's lordship in this ecological sense, that is in the sense of his transcendence over and active participation in the whole of creation, has significant implications for an understanding of redemption through Christ. Such a redemption necessarily encompasses all three aspects of the triangular relationships discussed earlier since all three are in need of redemption and reconciliation. Redemption must therefore be seen as far more than simply a restored relationship

between the individual and God. As W. Schrage asserts it can be viewed as a hope and an already partially realized existence which is much more far-reaching in its scope.<sup>125</sup>

Recalling Isaiah 24:4-5, it is obvious that the apostle Paul, in Romans 8:19-21, provides a soteriology which encompasses nature in connection with humanity. A helpful translation of Paul's words is provided by C. F. D. Moule.

For creation, with eager expectancy, is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. For creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice but because of Adam's sin which pulled down nature with it, since God had created Adam to be in close connection with nature. But the disaster was not unattended by hope-the hope that nature, too, with man, will be released from its servitude to decay, into the glorious freedom which characterizes man when he is a true and obedient son of God.<sup>126</sup>

The image evoked by the words of the prophet Isaiah gives an idea of a world in which God has reconciled humanity with the whole of creation and has restored the relationship of both with himself.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
and the calf and the lion and the fatling  
together,  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall feed;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The sucking child shall play over the hole of the  
asp,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand  
on the adder's den.  
(Isaiah 11:6-8)

Isaiah 35 gives further testimony to the restoration of plant and animal life to their "unfallen" status because of a restoration of the "knowledge" of the Lord. We can also take note of Ezekiel's vision of the river of life that proceeds from the temple of God so that "everything will live where the river goes"(Ez. 47:9), a vision which is elaborated in Revelation (22:1-5).

Biblical eschatology describes the "day of the Lord" when Christ will come with judgement of fire. The heavens will pass away with a great noise and the earth will be burned up (Isaiah 51:61; 34:4; 65:17; 66:22; Psalm 102:25-26).

Lift up your eyes to the heavens,  
and look at the earth beneath;  
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,  
the earth will wear out like a garment...  
(Isaiah 51:6)

New Testament passages such as Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; II Thess. 1:7-8; II Pet. 3:10; and Rev. 20:11; 21:1 share this view.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,  
and then the heavens will pass away with a loud  
noise, and the elements will be dissolved with  
fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it  
will be burned up. (II Peter 3:10)

Biblical revelation does not clearly state exactly how the cosmos will be changed into the "new heaven and new earth." The details of that transformation are a mystery known only

to God. Passages such as Psalm 50:3; Isaiah 66:15-16; Dan. 7:10-11; II Pet. 3:7 and 3:10 all declare that this present world is stored up for a consuming fire, associated with the coming of Christ at the end of the age. Henlee Barnette suggests that "the term 'fire' is used symbolically to describe a kind of transformation of the world through judgement and grace."<sup>127</sup> He goes on to suggest that the third chapter of II Peter reminds readers of three worlds:

1. the "old world" destroyed by the flood (II Pet. 3:4);
2. the existing world (v. 7);
3. the "new world" (v. 13).

Barnette points out that just as the flood did not mean the end of the "old world" but a new beginning, so the coming fire must be understood as a purification and transformation of the existing world into a new creation through judgement and grace.

Hence, the new and coming creation will be a renewal of the present cosmos. The form, but not the substance, of the first creation will pass away. The old will be fulfilled in the new. All things in heaven and on earth will ultimately find their unity in God, whose purpose it is to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10). The present world, therefore, is a parable of and a prelude to the new.<sup>128</sup>

It seems quite clear that, according to biblical teaching, God has demonstrated that nature (non-human



creation) was intended to play an important role not only in fulfilling the needs of humanity, but also in revealing God's glory and creative splendor. As such, non-human creation has been recognized, by this thesis, as part of a triangular relationship with both God and humanity. When one of those three relationships is fractured, all three become affected. Reconciliation and healing is therefore required in all three sides of the triangle. Since all three fall under the cosmic lordship of Christ, they are recipients of his redemptive activity. Just as humanity longs for release from sin and decay, so too, creation awaits the fulness of reconciliation with God and humanity which is promised in the second coming of Christ at the end of the age. God's redemptive plan must, therefore, be understood in ecological terms including not only humanity but the whole of creation.

#### 4.7 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Paul Santmire, The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Henlee Barnette, The Church and the Ecological Crisis (Grand Rapids Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), p. 69.

<sup>4</sup>Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 33, quoted in Barnette, The Church and the Ecological Crisis, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup>Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, A Worldly Spirituality: A Call to Redeem Life on Earth (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 97.

<sup>6</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>The term "nature," as it is used in this thesis, will be defined on pp. 84-86.

<sup>8</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Michaelson, A Worldly Spirituality, p. 82.

<sup>11</sup>Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup>See G. Kittel et al. (ed.), "ge," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, quoted in Santmire, The Travail of Nature, p. 223.

<sup>13</sup>It should be noted that the writer of the first creation account does not explicitly address the question, "Where does 'matter' come from?" The Christian doctrine of creation, however, asserts that, in the wider canonical context and in contrast to pagan creation myths of the Ancient Near East (discussed in later sections), all matter must ultimately come from God. Thus, this doctrine presupposes that, had the Priestly writer been asked directly, "From where does all matter come?" he would have answered, "From Yahweh (God)."

<sup>14</sup>Langdon Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth: The Christian Doctrine of Creation in the Light of Modern Knowledge (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1965), p. 51.

<sup>15</sup>Waldemar Janzen, Still in the Image: Essays in Biblical Theology and Anthropology (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1982) p. 42.

<sup>16</sup>Nancy Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited: A Judeo-Christian Theology of Man and Nature," Landscape Journal (Fall, 1985), p. 102.

<sup>17</sup>See Bernhard W. Anderson, Creation versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible (New York: Association Press, 1967), pp. 17-22 for a brief but helpful narration of the Babylonian myth Enuma elish. Full translation in ANET.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. p. 19

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. p. 21

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Anderson, Creation versus Chaos, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup>Thorkild Jacobson, "Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia," Journal of Near Eastern Studies Vol. II (1943), pp. 159-72, quoted in Anderson, Creation versus Chaos, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup>Paul Santmire, Brother Earth: Nature, God and Ecology in Time of Crisis (New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1970), p. 137.

<sup>24</sup>Barnette, The Church and the Ecological Crisis, p. 70.

<sup>25</sup>Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 102.

<sup>26</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Sittler, Nature and Grace, p. 37.

<sup>28</sup>Rosemary Ruether, "Critic's Corner," Theology Today 27 (Oct. 1970), p. 337.

<sup>29</sup>Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 105.

<sup>30</sup>Sittler, Nature and Grace, p. 37.

<sup>31</sup>Barnette, The Church and the Ecological Crisis, p. 70.

<sup>32</sup>William Temple, Nature, Man and God (London: MacMillan, 1951), p. 493.

<sup>33</sup>Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 102.

<sup>34</sup>Santmire, Brother Earth, p. 138.

<sup>35</sup>Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. p. 86.

<sup>37</sup>See section 4.4.1 (Human and Non-human Creation).

<sup>38</sup>Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth, p. 86-87.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. p. 87.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Waldemar Janzen, Beginnings of the Covenant People: Old Testament Survey (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1986), p. 3.

<sup>42</sup>See H. E. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God (Lutherworth press, 1949), p. 270, quoted in Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth, p. 90.

<sup>43</sup>Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth, p. 90.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. p. 94.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid. p. 95

<sup>47</sup>Barnette, The Church and the Ecological Crisis, p. 68.

<sup>48</sup>Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth, p. 106.

<sup>49</sup>Barnette, The Church and the Ecological Crisis, p. 68.

<sup>50</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 1. (London: Nisbet, 1953), p. 280.

<sup>51</sup>Norman Young, Creator, Creation and Faith, (London: W. Collins Sons & Co., 1976), p. 109.

<sup>52</sup>Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth, p. 108

<sup>53</sup>Karl Barth, Credo (London: Holder & Stoughton, 1936), p. 30.

<sup>54</sup>Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 16.

<sup>55</sup>Barnette, The Church and the Ecological Crisis, p. 68.

<sup>56</sup>Koran, Sura 19:88.

<sup>57</sup>The cosmic scope of redemption through Christ will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.6. (Nature's inclusion in God's Redemptive Activity).

<sup>58</sup>Ian McHarg, Design With Nature (Garden City, N.Y.: The National History Press, 1969), p. 26.

<sup>59</sup>Janzen, Still in the Image, p. 41.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid. p. 42.

<sup>61</sup>Claus Westermann, Genesis 1-11: A Commentary, trans., John J. Scullion, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), p. 207, points out that the breath of life means simply being alive, and the breathing in of this breath, nothing more.

<sup>62</sup>Janzen, Still in the Image, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup>Hans Walter Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) p. 94.

<sup>64</sup>Santmire, Brother Earth, p. 143.

<sup>65</sup>Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, p. 10.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. chapter 2 "nepes --Needy Man," pp. 10-23. Johannes Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, I-II, trans. A. Moller (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 107, 458, 474, 459, also notes that for the Old Testament writers, the nephesh penetrated beyond the body into all that a person possessed. The connection was particularly intimate between man and the land. In Pedersen's words, the landed property of a family, "belongs to the psychic totality of the family and cannot be divided from it." Santmire, Brother Earth, p. 192, points out that the same was true generally for Israel and its land.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid. p. 159.

<sup>69</sup>Westermann, Genesis.

<sup>70</sup>See Th. C. Vriezen, Oudtestamentische studien II, "La creation de l'homme d'appres l'image de Dieu," (1943) pp. 87-105, referred to by Westermann, Genesis, p. 150.

<sup>71</sup>See Karl Barth, The Doctrine of Creation, trans. J. W. Edwards, et. al., Church Dogmatics III/1 (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1958), p. 184.

<sup>72</sup>Westermann, Genesis, p. 151. see also Gerhard von Rad's contribution to the article "eikon," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Gerhard Kittel (ed.), Vol. II, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 392.

<sup>73</sup>Hans Wildberger, "Das Abbild Gottes, Gen. 1:26-30," Theologische Zeitschrift 21 (1965): pp. 245-259, 481-501, reviewed by Claus Westermann, Genesis, p. 152-53.

<sup>74</sup>W. H. Schmidt, Die Schopfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift, Kap. III B 9: "Das achte Schopfungswerk: die Menschen. Gen. 1:26-30," Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 17 (1964), pp. 127-148, reviewed by Claus Westermann, Genesis, p. 152-53.

<sup>75</sup>Janzen, Still in the Image, p.53-54.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid. p. 54

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>D. Jobling, "Dominion over Creation," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplementary Volume (Nashville Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1976), p. 248.

<sup>79</sup>Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, p. 163.

<sup>80</sup>Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 99. The following discussion on the three metaphors is loosely based on Denig's findings.

<sup>81</sup>Kenneth Grayston, "Marriage," in A Theological Word Book of the Bible (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1957), p. 140, referred to in Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 99.

<sup>82</sup>O. S. Rankin, "God," Ibid., referred to in Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 99.

<sup>83</sup>Norman K. Gottwald, A Light to the Nations (N. Y.: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 462, referred to in Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 99.

<sup>84</sup>Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 99.

<sup>85</sup>James J. Megivern, "Ecology and the Bible," The Ecumenist Vol. 8, No. 5 (July-August), p. 70.

<sup>86</sup>Claus Westermann, Creation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 52, referred to in Robin Attfield, "Christian Attitudes to Nature," Journal of the History of Ideas, Inc. (July, 1983), p. 347.

<sup>87</sup>Thomas Seiger Derr, Ecology and Human Need (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), first published under the title Ecology and Human Liberation: A Theological Critique of the Use and Abuse of our Birthright, referred to in Attfield, "Christian Attitudes to Nature," p. 347.

<sup>88</sup>Loren Wilkinson, ed. Earthkeeping (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), p. 209, quoted in Michaelson, A Worldly Spirituality, p. 65.

<sup>89</sup>Michaelson, A Worldly Spirituality, p. 65

<sup>90</sup>Watkins Denig, "On Values Revisited," p. 100.

<sup>91</sup>The following examples are based on Denig's discussion, p. 100.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Janzen, Still in the Image, p. 185.

<sup>94</sup>Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "Ecological Notes from the Old Testament," in A Light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers edited by Bream, Hein and Moore, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), p. 427.

<sup>95</sup>Janzen, Still in the Image, p. 160.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Hans E. von Waldow, "Israel and Her Land: Some Theological Considerations," in A Light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers edited by Bream, Hein and Moore, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), p. 494.

- <sup>98</sup> von Rohr Sauer, "Ecological Notes," p. 494.
- <sup>99</sup> von Waldow, "Israel and Her Land," p. 426.
- <sup>100</sup> von Rohr Sauer, "Ecological Notes," p. 4
- <sup>101</sup> Janzen, Still in the Image, p. 163.
- <sup>102</sup> The laws which precede this passage can be understood as protecting that which is intended in God's creation order.
- <sup>103</sup> von Waldow, "Israel and Her Land," p. 503.
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid. p. 502.
- <sup>105</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the topic of Israel and her land, see Walter Breuggemann, The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), W. D. Davies, The Gospel and the Land: Early Christian and Jewish Territorial Doctrine (Berkley: Univ. of California Press, 1974), D. J. Epp-Tiessen, Jeremiah's Theology of Land (Winnipeg: Univ. of Manitoba, 1981, M. A. Thesis, unpub.) and their bibliographical references.
- <sup>106</sup> Michaelson, A Worldly Spirituality, p. 82.
- <sup>107</sup> Janzen, Still in the Image, p. 159.
- <sup>108</sup> Santmire, Brother Earth, p. 192-193.
- <sup>109</sup> Megivern, "Ecology and the Bible," p. 70.
- <sup>110</sup> Janzen, Still in the Image, p. 159.
- <sup>111</sup> Michaelson, A Worldly Spirituality, p. 83.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>113</sup> Megivern, "Ecology and the Bible," p. 70.
- <sup>114</sup> John Hart, The Spirit of the Earth: A Theology of the Land (N. J.: Paulist Press, 1984)
- <sup>115</sup> Michaelson, A Worldly Spirituality, p. 85.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>117</sup> Ibid.



<sup>118</sup>Ibid. p. 86.

<sup>119</sup>Epp-Tiessen, Jeremiah's Theology of Land, p. 18.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>122</sup>Michaelson, A Worldly Spirituality, p. 82.

<sup>123</sup>John G. Gibbs, Creation and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Theology (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 142.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>See W. Schrage, "Die Stellung zur Welt bei Paulus, Epiktet und Apokalyptik. Ein Beitrag zu I Kor. 7:29-31," Zeitschrift fur Theologie und Kirche 61 (1964): 127-28, quoted in Steck, World and Environment, p. 248.

<sup>126</sup>C. F. D. Moule, Man and Nature in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 9-10.

<sup>127</sup>Barnette, The Church and the Ecological Crisis, p. 77.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

5.0 BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

The previous chapter presented a biblical interpretive position whose scope explores beyond the theanthropocentric focus of much of the West's theology. It can be seen as an attempt to broaden the interpretive scope so as to include the natural world as part of a triangular set of relationships between God, humanity and nature. Furthermore, the thesis has suggested that biblical teaching affirms the whole of creation as being the recipient of God's redemptive work.<sup>1</sup> While the previous chapter spoke of the coming of God's kingdom in the eschatological terms of a new creation, in which there is a harmonious relationship between God, humanity, and the rest of creation, this thesis asserts that the beginnings of that eschatological redemption can be, or have already been, set in motion. Just as the feeding of the hungry, the welcoming of the stranger and the visiting of the sick or imprisoned might be seen as preparing the way for God's eternal rule (Matt. 25:34-40), so too, it would seem that the restoration of the natural world through responsible stewardship can be seen as preparing the way for God's universal redemptive work.

Further, this thesis suggests that if the Christian church wishes to participate in God's redemptive activity, the scope of its ethics should not be limited to humans and

society but should rather be extended to include all three aspects of the triangular relationship between God, humanity and nature. This chapter will attempt to outline briefly some basic principles, derived from the material presented in chapter four, which might guide a biblical approach to contemporary discourse on environmental ethics. While environmental ethics has a very broad scope which can be said to include such issues as human population growth, industrial wastes, and chemical pollutants, the primary focus of the ethical principles developed in this chapter is directed toward those issues and perceptions which pertain to landscape design and planning.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the principles developed from the biblical interpretation presented in this thesis are intended to foster a sensitive attitude towards the natural environment and promote biblically based, ecologically responsible decision-making in the landscape design and planning professions. The articulation of the principles developed in this thesis serve to demonstrate that the deeply rooted biblical concern for the goodness, integrity and preservation of the environment presented in the previous chapter can serve as a valuable resource for contemporary discourse in environmental ethics. Thus, these biblically based principles affirm the ethical principles of stewardship and ecological, as well as social, responsibility on which the profession of landscape architecture is currently based.

The principles outlined in this chapter are closely inter-related and, perhaps, overlap to an extent. They differ, however, in their focus. As such, these principles will be presented in four general groupings:

1. those which affirm humanity and the need to accept and accommodate human-environmental interaction,
2. those which affirm non-human creation and focus on nature's God-given goodness,
3. those which call upon designers to base their design philosophy on an ethic of stewardship which demonstrates humility and respect for creation and its Creator, and,
4. those which call upon landscape architects/planners to design holistically and give recognition to the inter-relationship between humankind and the natural world.

An attempt will be made to demonstrate, by examples, how these principles might bear upon decision-making at various stages of the design process.

#### 5.1 Acceptance and Accommodation of Human-environmental Interaction

There exists a growing tendency in our time, especially among some naturalists, to accept a uni-dimensional perception of humanity as a kind of "environmental blight."

The image conceived by Loren Eiseley expresses quite clearly the reason why this has become a popular characterization for humanity.

Man in space is enabled to look upon the distant earth, a celestial orb, a revolving sphere. He sees it to be green, from the verdure on the land, algae greening the oceans, a green celestial fruit. Looking closely at the earth, he perceives blotches, black, brown, grey and from these extend dynamic tentacles upon the green epidermis. These blemishes he recognizes as the cities and works<sub>3</sub> of man and asks, "Is man but a planetary disease?"<sup>3</sup>

The evidence of humanly induced environmental degradation certainly makes it difficult to answer this question in anything but the affirmative. And yet, there is a danger in answering the question whole-heartedly in the affirmative. The danger lies in the acceptance of a fatalistic view which overlooks the human potential to have a positive environmental influence and concludes that there can be no other way. Associated with such a form of pessimism, one might also expect to find an anti-human value system in which only natural landscapes, untouched by human hands, are perceived as good, while all human development is frowned upon.

This thesis recognizes the human capacity to violate the natural landscape through rapid, uncontrolled development or ecologically insensitive planning. The previous chapter has attributed such conduct to "sin," which it described in terms of alienation in the

God-man-nature relationship. Such alienation was understood as humanity's striving for autonomy from God and nature and its self-perception as a master rather than a steward. The previous discussion further highlighted the biblical teaching that human sins against God and against other humans have an adverse effect upon non-human creation as well. Thus, we might also understand environmental degradation in terms of human greed, self-interest and self-gratification, hedonism, rebellion against God and disregard for fellow human beings.

Although this thesis acknowledges this human capacity to violate the natural environment, it rejects the fatalistic pessimism of the uni-dimensional characterization of humanity as "a planetary disease," on the basis that it promotes the alienation of humans from nature rather than encouraging holism and unity.

The interpretive discussion in chapter four suggested that, in biblical teaching, humanity was created by a good God who expressed divine satisfaction for his human creation. The Bible thus affirms the human potential to do "good," as it might be defined by living in accordance with God's will. As well, the previous chapter outlined the biblical image of humanity as being formed from the soil of

the environment by its creator, and expected to live in a God-willed relationship of radical interdependence with its environment.<sup>4</sup> As such, biblical teaching highlights the importance of creation in meeting human need and the human capacity to have a positive co-existence with the natural environment. Therefore, this thesis suggests that a biblically-based environmental ethic should observe the following principles:

1. Humanity must be affirmed as having God-given goodness.

This basic principle might guide the designer in several ways. Firstly, it presupposes that the landscape architect/planner has the capacity to develop and implement a design which is in accordance with God's will for his creation. Secondly, it compels the designer to demonstrate a genuine concern and consciousness for the social implications of his or her work.

2. Human influence in the landscape must be accepted and accommodated.

This principle presupposes the aforementioned human capacity to have a positive environmental influence and acknowledges humanity's dependence on the environment. It

assumes that all necessary forms of human development, be they residential, recreational, institutional, commercial, industrial, agricultural, etc. can and must be accommodated. This does not, however, imply that all or any such human land-uses are appropriate for any given site. Responsible land-use planning must consider what type and intensity of land-use is appropriate for different landscapes. For example, an ecologically sensitive area such as an aquifer recharge zone would be an inappropriate location for a land use such as waste disposal since it would endanger the subsurface water quality.

4. Humanity displays a tendency to despoil the environment.

While the Bible teaches that humanity can display God-given goodness in its environmental inter-relationship, it also recognizes the human potential to despoil the environment as a result of sin. If, for example, a consultant is asked to offer his or her design services for a project whose pre-determined program, for economic reasons, dictates a land-use which is ecologically and/or socially inappropriate for the site, the designer is faced with an ethical decision which must be made. One option is to take on the project and attempt to minimize the



anticipated adverse environmental and social impact that such development might have through program modification and careful site-specific design. If, however, the implications of such development were detrimental to the landscape, irrespective of detailed design, and the client was unwilling to modify the development program and proposed land-use, the designer may feel compelled to refuse any involvement in the project on the basis that it demonstrates poor stewardship of God's gift, the earth.

#### 5.2 Recognition of the God-given Goodness of the Natural Environment and Awareness of its Vulnerability

While the fourth chapter demonstrated the biblical affirmation of God's human creation, it also established a biblical basis for recognizing goodness and value in the natural world.<sup>5</sup> This interpretation was illustrated in: God's divine satisfaction with his creation as it is expressed in the Priestly document, the poetic images of nature praising God (which suggests an image of God joyfully receiving that praise and taking delight in the goodness of his creation), the incarnation of Christ into the material world, the use of the fruits of the earth (bread and wine) to represent God's blessing symbolically, and, finally, in nature's further participation in satisfying humanity's basic physical and emotional needs as well as forming the interactive context with and within which humanity

experiences God.<sup>6</sup> We have seen that this biblical interpretive position implies a rejection of any Gnostic, Marcionite<sup>7</sup> or related interpretation which promotes a perception of the world as being inherently evil. Not only does this thesis suggest that such interpretations are unhelpfull as a basis for an environmentally responsive ethic, but it also argues that they contradict fundamental teachings of the biblical canon.

As well, the interpretive position presented in this thesis contrasts the attitude of conquest and expansion, which has historically promoted a negative perception of many natural features, viewing them primarily as obstacles to be eliminated.<sup>8</sup> Based on the biblical position presented, this thesis seeks to encourage a more positive perception of the existing natural features and processes of the landscape with a recognition of its vulnerability. If nature is understood biblically as having been created with God-given purpose, meaning, and integrity which includes, but also extends beyond its fulfillment of human need, then the system of ethics which governs human interaction with nature must respect that inherent purpose and integrity. The following biblically based principle offers guidance for such an ethic:

1. Nature possesses its own God-given goodness, purpose, and meaning which transcends the value which humanity ascribes to it.

This principle urges the designer to consider the existing processes and features of the natural landscape prior to introducing changes. This would involve an appropriate method of site analysis which considers such factors as climate, geology, soils, slope, hydrology, vegetation, and wildlife. Based on such an analysis, and a perception which acknowledges the purpose and goodness in the natural processes and features, the designer will be equipped to make informed and responsible decisions whose physical manifestation on the landscape would be complimentary rather than disruptive.

### 5.3 Humility and Respect for Creation and its Creator: An Ethic of Stewardship

The concept of an "architect of the land" might be thought of as having the potential of leading to an attitude of human arrogance over both God and nature. Landscape architects manipulate and create landforms, design water features, determine where vegetation is to be planted or removed, affect wildlife as well as society. With such a great potential influence over both nature and society, landscape architects could easily adopt a self-perception in

which they view themselves as "masters" rather than "stewards." As we saw in chapter three, this human tendency has manifested itself particularly from the upsurge of humanism in the Renaissance and its extension into the modern secularization of nature.<sup>9</sup>

In the fourth chapter, the biblical relationship between humanity and the rest of the created world was described as one of dominion. The biblical notion of dominion, in this context, has been interpreted, by this thesis, to refer to the influential authority which humanity has over the rest of nature. In addition to humanity's God-given authority, one can also observe a certain power which humanity has over nature. While humans are relatively weak physically, in comparison with the forces of nature, their dexterity, rationality, and alliance with technology, have made them the most environmentally influential animal species on the earth.

The fourth chapter has interpreted biblical teaching to assert that humankind has been commissioned and endowed with the capacity to exercise its authority (dominion) with an attitude of stewardship, toward creation as well as respect and love for the sovereign God of all creation. Furthermore, the Bible describes humanity as having been

created in the image of God, which chapter four has interpreted to mean, primarily, that humanity ought to exercise its authority as a representative of God, thus acting in accordance with his will to sustain and further life. Therefore, as the previous chapter pointed out, with authority comes accountability and responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

Although this thesis affirms the Bible's teaching that humanity has been commissioned to act as a steward and caretaker of God's creation and has the capacity to have a positive influence upon, and interaction with, the natural environment, it also recognizes the potential perversion of that commission as it manifests itself in environmental despotism. As this chapter and the one which preceded it have already explained, this perversion can be attributed to alienation in the God-man-nature relationship, generally referred to as "the fall."<sup>11</sup> The following biblical principles might be seen as deterrents to such perversion and as guidelines to the formulation of a biblical ethic of creative stewardship:

1. A biblical ethic of creative stewardship must be based on an attitude of humility and respect for and accountability before God.

This general principle challenges the landscape architect to design landscapes which not only respond to the

wishes/expectations of clients, review committees and design critics but which also respond in obedience to God's will, which this chapter has attempted to articulate in its other principles.

2. Such an ethic should be rooted in a perception of the natural environment as belonging ultimately to God, having been entrusted to humanity to be enjoyed and cared for in accordance with God's best interests, and, therefore, also the best interests of his collective creation (human and non-human).

A biblically-based social and ecological conscience which generates sensitive landscape design and planning is, therefore, based not only upon a rational response to the threat of global extinction due to environmental mismanagement. The biblical ethic which guides responsible design is rooted in the understanding of the landscape as the creation of God, whose care, restoration and completion has been entrusted to humanity. As a representative steward, the landscape architect has a particular professional responsibility before God. The kind of conduct which the principles in the previous sections have called for are based, therefore, not only on an affirmation of humanity and of the natural world, but also on an

understanding of the whole created realm belonging ultimately to God.

#### 5.4 Recognition of the Inter-relationship between Humankind and the Natural World: A Holistic View

The interpretive discussion in chapter four has established a biblical basis for understanding the relationship of humanity and the environment as one of interdependence and affinity.<sup>12</sup> As has already been said, humanity shares with plants and animals its physical substance made up of the elements of the earth. As well, humans, like animals, were created with a reliance on plant life for their sustenance. Psalm 104 was cited as a prime example of a God-willed inter-relationship between all creatures.

Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle,  
and plants for man to cultivate,  
that he may bring forth food from the earth...

The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly,  
the cedars of Lebanon which he planted.  
In them the birds build their nests;  
the stork has her home in the fir trees.  
The high mountains are for the wild goats;  
the rocks are a refuge for the badgers.  
Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons;  
the sun knows its time for setting.  
Thou makest darkness, and it is night,  
when all the beasts of the forest creep forth.  
The young lions roar for their prey,  
seeking their food from God.  
When the sun rises, they get them away  
and lie down in their dens.  
Man goes forth to his work  
and to his labor until evening.  
(Psalm 104:14, 16-23)

Such biblical teaching is not unlike contemporary biological/ecological views of nature which recognize the interconnection and interdependence of humanity and its environment. Such an understanding depends on a rejection of the conceptual dualism between humanity and the environment which has persisted in various forms throughout history reaching its climax in the modern period with its Cartesian articulation as a subject/object dichotomy. As well, a holistic view calls for a rejection of the kind of reductionistic thinking which considers the world of nature to be composed of seemingly unrelated parts. The following biblically based principle is suggested as a guide for a holistic environmental ethic:

1. A biblical environmental ethic must be holistic, recognizing that humanity does not stand outside of, but lives in solidarity with the environment.

This principle heightens the designer's awareness of the environmental consequences of his or her actions and promotes a philosophy of dealing thoughtfully with long term and short term uses of natural and social resources. It would encourage some form of environmental impact assessment for any kind of development. Such an assessment might follow a similar procedure to the following:



- i. Description of the proposed plan of action;
- ii. Listing of alternatives to and of the proposed plan;
- iii. Description of the environmental setting and impact of the proposed plan of action;
- iv. Description of anticipated adverse environmental effects and their mitigation measures;
- v. Projection of the relationship between local short-term uses of the human environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity;
- vi. Listing of any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved, should the proposed plan of action be implemented.

A process of this nature would help the landscape architect/planner to work with the landscape with a holistic understanding of the influence of the proposed plan of action.

#### 5.5 Concluding Remarks

Several conclusions can be drawn from the findings presented in this thesis. With respect to the contribution of the Judeo-Christian tradition to the environmental crisis, the thesis has rejected Lynn White's hypothesis of a direct, linear causal relationship as being over-simplified. It has argued, in support of Moncrief's conclusions, that

the Judeo-Christian tradition has historically contributed to the West's environmental crisis, as part of a larger cultural matrix (Fig. 3). As well, this thesis has suggested that the Judeo-Christian tradition need not be considered as an indispensable component in the complex of cultural factors which have brought about Western environmental exploitation.

At the same time, it has not been the intent of this thesis to argue that the Judeo-Christian interpretive tradition has not given rise to ecologically problematic concepts of the God-man-nature relationship. Chapter three has demonstrated that, since biblical times, there have been numerous interpretive trends which have been identified as being problematic on the basis that they encouraged a negative perception of the the natural world or that they promoted a dualism or dichotomy either between God and the material world or between humanity and nature.

While such problematic interpretations have emerged throughout history, several interpretive positions which have demonstrated signs of ecological promise have also been identified. Chapter four, represents an attempt to pursue the biblical elements of ecological promise by expanding the scope of interpretation beyond the prevalent

the anthropocentric focus to include the natural world as a theologically significant component of a tripartite set of relationships between God, humanity and nature. Thus, chapter four has interpreted and presented the biblical material in such a way as to highlight several key points:

1. Nature as possessing intrinsic value and goodness,
2. God as an active participant in the natural world,
3. Humanity as being intimately related to non-human creation,
4. Humanity as a steward of God's creation, and
5. Nature as the recipient of God's redemptive activity.

On the basis of these findings, this thesis has developed principles which are intended to encourage an environmentally sensitive attitude and promote responsible, biblically based, decision making in the landscape design and planning professions. They, further, help to demonstrate that biblical teaching does not necessitate a narrowly anthropocentric, despotic attitude toward the environment, but rather can offer one of holism, stewardship and sensitivity. Thus, they are complimentary to the philosophical and ethical principles upon which the landscape design and planning professions are currently based.

## 5.6 Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>See 4.6 (Natures Inclusion in God's Redemptive Activity), pp. 149-156.

<sup>2</sup>See 2.4 (Landscape Architecture and Values) for definition, pp. 14-15.

<sup>3</sup>Loren Eiseley, lecture in the series, "The House We Live In," WCAU-TV, Feb. 5. 1961, paraphrased by Ian McHarg, Design With Nature (Garden City, N. Y.: Natural-History Press, 1969), p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>See 4.4.1 (Human and Non-human Creation), pp. 113-118.

<sup>5</sup>See 4.2 (Natures Intrinsic Value), pp. 84-96.

<sup>6</sup>It should be noted that, while the biblical view of nature presented in the previous chapter affirms its God-given goodness, purpose, and meaning it also describes nature, like humanity, as being in a "fallen" state (short of fully reflecting God's original intention), as a result of human sin, and therefore being in need of redemption. (See 4.5 and 4.6) This does not, however, imply that nature is evil, rather it acknowledges certain "tensions" in the "harmony" of nature. These tensions become evident when we compare nature, as we know it, (or as it is described in Romans 8:19-21) with biblical images of reconciliation such as that which is portrayed by Isaiah 11:6-18.

On the one hand, the processes of nature appear to display harmony in the sense of food chains and cycles of energy etc. On the other hand there appears to be a certain "discord" evident in the perpetual, pain and suffering which characterize the hostile natural world, in which species become extinct because they cannot adapt to a changing environment (e.g. dinosaurs) and in which creatures are killed and eaten by other creatures (carnivors) or simply killed by other natural forces. As such, while the biblical view of nature denies that the earth is inherently evil, and rather affirms it as being "good," nature, like humanity is said to mourn and wither (Isaiah 24:5) and groan in travail, longing for God's redemption (Romans 8:21). The biblical image of a "new (redeemed) creation" is one in which there is no more pain and suffering (Rev. 21:4).

<sup>7</sup>See 3.1.1 (Anticomic Dualism: An Alien God and an Evil Earth), pp. 42-48, esp. pp. 37-45.

<sup>8</sup>See 2.3 (Exploring the Cultural Basis for the Environmental Crisis), esp. pp. 35.

<sup>9</sup>See 3.2.1 (The Renaissance: Upsurge of Humanism), pp. 45-60, and 3.3.1 (Newton: The Secularization of Nature), pp. 71-74.

<sup>10</sup>See 4.4.3 (Stewardship as the basis for dominion), esp. pp. 130 and 131.

<sup>11</sup>See 4.5 (Alienation in the God-man-nature Relationship), pp. 139-149.

<sup>12</sup>See 4.4.1 (Human and Non-human Creation), pp. 113-118.

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